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New York

President: Ms. Mushikiwabo/Mr. Nduhungirehe/Mr. Kayinamura .... (Rwanda)

Members:

Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
Australia	Mr. Quinlan
Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
China	Mr. Li Baodong
France	Mr. Briens
Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
Morocco	Mr. Loulichki
Pakistan	Mr. Masood Khan
Republic of Korea	Mr. Chao Tae-yul
Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
Togo	Mr. Kandangha-Bariki
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

Women and peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of Her Excellency Baroness Thatcher, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The President: At the outset of this meeting, I should like, on behalf of the members of the Security Council, to express profound grief and sorrow at the passing of Baroness Thatcher, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The members of the Council convey their deepest sympathy to the family of Baroness Thatcher and to the Government and people of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

I now invite the members of the Council to rise and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of Baroness Thatcher.

The members of the Security Council observed a minute of silence.

Expression of sympathy for the victims of the Boston Marathon bombing

The President: Let me also take this moment to express our deepest sympathy for the victims of the senseless killing that took place in Boston two days ago. To the families, the people and the Government of the United States of America, the Security Council expresses deep sympathy.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Women and peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149)

The President: I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, the Ministers and other representatives present in the Security Council Chamber this morning. Their participation is an affirmation of the importance of the subject matter under discussion today.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, the Sudan, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tanzania and Viet Nam to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Saran Keïta Diakité of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Security Council invite Archbishop Francis Assisi Chullikatt, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and previous practice in that regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2013/149, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict.

I now have the pleasure to give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: Thank you very much, Madam President, for convening this important meeting on conflict-related sexual violence, an issue of grave importance to the innumerable civilians who have been affected, to all of us around the table and to the entire United Nations system. I welcome Rwanda's initiative and your presence here today. I also thank the Security Council for its recognition of this matter as a serious concern for international peace and security.

Wartime rape not only destroys individual lives, it lays waste to families and communities. It is also an impediment to reconciliation and sustainable development. Thanks to the Council, the world now has a solid framework for preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence. Resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010) help guide the work of United Nations agencies, Member States and other stakeholders. My dynamic and persuasive Special Representative on this issue carries out global advocacy.

Other important actors and tools include the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, the women protection advisers and the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements. The report now before the Council (S/2013/149) reflects the progressive improvement of analysis and data over the past few years, which is a direct result of greater awareness on the ground and the strengthened capacities of missions to monitor, investigate and respond.

As we learn more about sexual violence used as a tactic of war, certain patterns are becoming clear. One is that the negative effects of wartime rape persist long after the guns fall silent. From the Balkans to Africa, United Nations entities and others continue to provide vital medical and psychosocial support to victims and survivors. Another pattern we see is that, although this vicious crime disproportionately affects women and girls, men and boys are also targeted.

My Special Representative has also noted other emerging trends, including the link between conflict-related sexual violence and the illegal exploitation of natural resources; the impact of sexual violence on displacement; and the importance of addressing sexual violence during ceasefire negotiations, wider peace processes and security-sector reform efforts. Building on the work of her predecessor and of the 13-entity United Nations Action against Sexual Violence network, which she chairs, my Special Representative has continued to fight impunity for conflict-related sexual violence. Ms. Bangura has stressed prosecution as a means of prevention. But she has also emphasized the importance of national ownership and leadership, which I fully support.

The prosecution support cells in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, created by the Government with the support of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are a positive example of combining the two approaches. Other peacekeeping operations intend to carry out similar projects. The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region also represents an opportunity to address the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence.

Ultimately, however, we must strengthen our collective efforts to prevent sexual violence in the first place.

Our peacekeeping missions in the Sudan, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, together with United Nations country teams, are working to establish monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements. That is a priority that I hope we can accomplish before the end of the year.

Together with tools such as the updated human rights database of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the protection monitoring project of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other information systems, we will be better placed to systematically identify trends and patterns, and thereby become better at preventing these crimes.

The sustainability of that work requires funding. We have now deployed eight women protection advisers in South Sudan, where the United Nations Mission in South Sudan is the first peace mission to budget for and appoint such advisers. We are also recruiting advisers for our missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and the Central African Republic. I call on Member States to provide adequate resources for the deployment of additional advisers in those and other situations of concern. We must make this a regular feature of planning and budgeting.

I would also like to call for sustained funding for the Team of Experts that works to strengthen the capacity of national rule of law and justice actors. The Team has worked with the authorities in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Liberia and South Sudan, and could do even more with the necessary backing.

Preventing sexual violence is first and foremost a responsibility of States, in particular of security forces, which are often the perpetrators of that grave human rights violation. But prevention is also a collective responsibility. To succeed, we must use all the tools at our disposal. That includes our peacekeeping and political missions, our mediation efforts and our efforts to protect human rights and deliver humanitarian assistance. It also encompasses the work of all those involved in building peace in the aftermath of conflict — from restoring the rule of law and advancing gender equality to promoting early recovery and longer-term development. As we deepen that effort, I look forward to the Council's sustained leadership and support.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to Ms. Bangura.

Ms. Bangura: I wish to thank the Government of Rwanda for convening this debate on sexual violence in conflict. I am also grateful for your presence, Madam Minister, to preside over the debate, as well as for this opportunity to address the Security Council.

I should like to start my statement by thanking the Secretary-General for his personal leadership in advancing this agenda, which has made a huge difference for me in carrying forward that agenda.

Three weeks, ago I visited Somalia. In Mogadishu, I met Luul Ali Osman, who, three months ago, faced the terrible weight of censure, arrest and imprisonment for having dared to speak out about her rape by security forces in a camp for internally displaced persons. Her case reminds us of the tremendous risks associated with reporting sexual violence, not only for the survivors themselves but for their families, the staff of non-governmental organizations who provide vital services and the journalists who try to shed light on such crimes.

For too long, war has been waged on the bodies of women like Luul. For too long, women have borne the crippling consequences — physical, psychological, social and economic — of wartime rape. They have been ostracized by their communities, cast out by husbands and families, left destitute with their children.

With sexual violence women lose everything, and in the process communities themselves are lost, because women are the life force of their communities. They are mothers and caregivers to the next generation; they are the healers, the economic backbone, the peacemakers and the peacekeepers.

That is why today we lift our voices in unison and once again join hands around this high table to renew our pact to break the silence and turn the tide on war's oldest and least condemned crime. In so doing, we stand in solidarity with the many thousands of victims and survivors around the world — not only women, but also children and men — to say to them that they are not forgotten, that their plight is of the highest priority, at the highest level of the international system.

Over the course of five years we have witnessed progress towards eradicating this crime. The Council has led from the front, ushering in a paradigm shift that has fundamentally altered our approach to dealing with sexual violence in conflict. Crucially, the Security Council's engagement has challenged long-standing myths that sexual violence is cultural, private, inevitable, or simply the random acts of a few renegades.

Resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010) affirm that sexual violence, when committed systematically and used as a tool of war, is a fundamental threat to the maintenance of international peace and security, and as such requires an operational security and justice response. It is an affirmation that there can be no credible security approach that does not take into account the security of women as part of its central calculus. Practically, it requires us to expand the circle of stakeholders beyond gender experts to also engage uniformed peacekeepers, mediators, ceasefire monitors, war-crimes prosecutors and the full range of civilian-protection actors.

Notwithstanding the progress that has been made as a result of the engagement of the Council, the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149) before members today paints a grim picture. In total, it covers 22 situations: conflict, post-conflict and other situations of concern. It also lists 32 parties in the annex to the report. Of those, six are State actors, while 26 are non-State actors.

The report highlights some critical themes such as the nexus between sexual violence and the illicit extraction of natural resources; sexual violence as a driver of the displacement of civilian populations; forced marriage, rape and sexual violence by armed groups; sexual violence as a tactic in the context of detention or interrogation; and the plight of children born out of wartime rape, about whom there is little or no information available and therefore no meaningful programmatic interventions.

The report emphasizes the urgency of ensuring that sexual violence considerations are explicitly and consistently reflected in peace processes, ceasefires and peace agreements, and in all security-sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes in which the United Nations is involved. The report also stresses the acute lack of services for victims. It is absolutely essential that we continue to meet our obligations to the survivors — the critical health, psychosocial, legal and other interventions that they must have to rebuild their lives. At the same time, we also have to throw a more concerted spotlight on the perpetrators, that is, those who commit, command or condone sexual violence in conflict.

The continued engagement of the Security Council must serve as an unequivocal statement of intent: sexual violence in conflict will not be tolerated, and the full force of international order will be brought to bear to ensure accountability for such crimes. The perpetrators must understand that there can be no hiding place, no amnesty, no safe harbour. They must know that they will be pursued by any and all means at our collective disposal. In the process, we will begin to transfer the stigma of this crime from the survivors to the perpetrators.

The main promise of resolution 1960 (2010) is prevention. It sets us on the path of accountability and deterrence. In that respect, it marks a political commitment to bring all of the Security Council's tools to bear in preventing the atrocity of wartime rape. The purpose of the 1960 (2010) accountability regime is to influence the conduct of perpetrators and would-be perpetrators.

Going forward, we must reinforce that regime. An effective compliance system can, for the first time, raise the cost and consequences for those who would commit such crimes, where until now the price has been borne by their victims. Today it is still largely "cost-free" to rape a woman, child or man in conflict. Sexual violence has been used through the ages precisely because it is such a cheap and devastating weapon. We can and must reverse that reality, making it a massive liability to commit, command or condone sexual violence in conflict.

Since taking office in September 2012, I have placed particular emphasis on engaging national stakeholders in order to foster national ownership, leadership and responsibility. While actions by the Council or the work of international justice mechanisms such as the International Criminal Court are essential to send a zero-tolerance message to perpetrators, ultimately they complement the measures that must be taken at the national level. It is at the country level that the political will is most required to strengthen national laws, institutions and capacities to prosecute sexual violence crimes, and to care for survivors.

This cannot be only a United Nations issue. It belongs first and foremost to Member States, who bear the primary legal and moral responsibility to ensure the protection and well-being of their citizens. The role of my Office, of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, and of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict network, which is composed of 13 United Nations entities working together to address this problem, is to support national authorities so as to strengthen their responses.

However, I cannot overemphasize that the commitment of the United Nations system, however great it may be, can never substitute for the political will and action of national authorities.

Three weeks ago I undertook my first trip to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I visited a community where last year 11 babies between the ages of 6 and 12 months old were raped by elements of Mai-Mai Simba/Lumumba, led by Morgan. It is unimaginable that anyone could have committed such atrocities.

Yet, under the cold light of strategy and tactics, the rationale and purpose is clear. What more effective way can there be to destroy a community than to target and devastate its children? Faced with such horror, we are compelled to turn the despair in our hearts into unshakeable resolve that this will not happen to our children — a resolve that matches the ruthlessness of those who would commit such crimes with our own relentless and unwavering pursuit of accountability, and, ultimately, deterrence and prevention.

I am pleased today to announce a joint communiqué of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations to strengthen cooperation in a number of critical areas, signed by the Prime Minister at the end of my visit. It reflects the firm commitment that was made to me by President Kabila Kabange to more effectively prosecute crimes of sexual violence.

The Parliament of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is also committed to establishing a parliamentary working group on sexual violence, and the Senate and the National Assembly will hold a special session on the issue. The communiqué presents an opportunity for renewed action on sexual violence prevention and the response in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Together we must hold the President to his commitments. At the same time, we must support him and his Government — technically and financially — so that they can deal decisively with the problem.

In Somalia, our collective efforts over the past months have freed Luul Ali Osman and those who have dared to speak out in support of her cause. Last week, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, speaking to military cadets in Mogadishu, declared that security forces who raped citizens of Somalia would be fought and defeated like any enemy of the State. I commend the President and his Government for their resolve to address the problem. We anticipate that a joint communiqué outlining a framework of cooperation to address sexual violence will be adopted in early May, when the international community convenes for the Somalia conference to be held in London.

The fact that preventing sexual violence will be one of the central issues discussed at that conference is an important commitment in itself. It signals that the issue does not remain on the margins of the discourse on peace consolidation in Somalia. Addressing sexual violence is an essential prerequisite for durable peace and development. I urge international donors to match their strong political commitment with the necessary financial resources, particularly for the provision of services to survivors on the ground. If we are to break that evil in Somalia and elsewhere, the level of financial commitment must meet the level of political commitment.

As the Council is aware, I also visited the Central African Republic in December 2012. Like all of us around this table, I am distressed by the subsequent outbreaks of conflict that have shredded the Libreville Peace Agreement, costing lives and resulting in sexual violence, child recruitment and other grave human rights violations. A number of commitments were made by the parties during my visit, which were expressed in two communiqués. We must send a clear message to the Séléka coalition and all the parties to the conflict that they are expected to uphold the commitments made. They must immediately identify and release all forcibly recruited children and women from their ranks. They also have to issue and implement clear orders prohibiting sexual violence and investigate all allegations, so as to hold perpetrators to account. The international community and the Council should insist that no party can be a credible partner in the peace process unless those basic conditions are met. I wish to highlight the fact that the ceasefire signed by the Séléka coalition in January did include explicit reference to sexual violence as part of the definition of that ceasefire. As a principle, that reference was exemplary and must be carried forward in the Central African Republic process and elsewhere.

Let us therefore make the commitment around this table today that, in situations where sexual violence is a concern, there will never again be a peace agreement, ceasefire agreement or ceasefire verification mechanism that does not explicitly address sexual violence. That includes the agreements that must eventually be concluded in Mali and Syria to bring an end to those conflicts.

I also wish to draw the attention of the Council to the visit to Colombia by my predecessor, Margot Wallström, shortly before she left office. During her visit, the Vice-President, speaking on behalf of the Government, expressed openness to the idea of developing what he referred to as a "framework of cooperation" that outlined key technical areas in which the United Nations and the Government might enhance cooperation to address sexual violence in conflict. The multifaceted response of the Colombian authorities to sexual violence in conflict carries important lessons for our global response. The key challenge in Colombia remains implementation, and it is my intention to follow up on Ms. Wallström's visit and to offer the technical support of the United Nations, including the Team of Experts, which have already conducted a follow-up visit. In the meantime, I urge the Colombian authorities to ensure that sexual violence considerations are explicitly reflected in the ongoing peace talks with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

I also intend to take up invitations by the authorities in Syria, Mali and South Sudan to visit as soon as possible. Conducting country visits will continue to be a key aspect of the mandate. Through such visits, we can bear witness to the plight of survivors and carry their voices to those in power. They are intended to open space locally for dialogue and action on sexual violence. They serve as a means to engage parties to conflict to make tangible protection commitments. They aim to foster international cooperation on the implementation of such mandates. The gravitas of the Council and the mandate established by the Council to address sexual violence in conflict open doors at the highest levels. We will continue to rely on the Security Council to support such an engagement-based approach.

I was also delighted last week to participate in the Group of Eight ministerial meeting in London, which endorsed the historic declaration on the prevention of sexual violence in conflict. The declaration represents important political and financial support. It gives us additional momentum at a crucial moment. The impetus afforded by such support at the highest levels of the international system is key to driving forward the prevention and protection agenda on the ground.

We have an opportunity, unlike at any time in history, to break the back of this age-old evil. We must believe that sexual violence in conflict is not inevitable. To eradicate it is not a "mission impossible", but will require political leadership and political courage, matched by bold protection initiatives on the ground. It is our hope, therefore, that, on the basis of the Secretary-General's report and his recommendations, the Security Council will once again show its resolve and unity of purpose and adopt in June a new resolution on sexual violence in conflict — one focused on accountability and prevention so as to further consolidate and institutionalize the sexual violence response in the context of the United Nations peace and security architecture and Council mandates. May this be a decisive moment — our moment to put an end to the crime that is a blight on our collective humanity.

The President: I thank Ms. Bangura for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Saran Keïta Diakité of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

Ms. Keïta Diakité (NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for this opportunity to address the Security Council. I speak today on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. I am also here in my capacity as the President of the Peace and Security Network of Women of the Area of the Economic Community of West African States.

We at the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security appreciate the ongoing work by numerous actors to combat violence against women, including the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We also welcome the analysis and recommendations in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149) on conflict-related sexual violence, including the recommendations that emphasize the ongoing necessity for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and security-sector reform programmes that are explicitly gender-responsive. The report highlights the urgency of addressing sexual violence in conflict in various situations — such as Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. The report also highlights the devastating impact of sexual violence in the conflict in my own country, Mali.

Effectively addressing the complexities of conflict-related sexual violence requires powerful and urgent leadership at all levels, the local, national, regional and international. Commitment and action in times of conflict, as well as post-conflict times and times of peace, are essential.

Today I will address several key areas where making progress is essential, namely, women's participation and equality, prevention, response, accountability, and resources.

With regard to participation and equality, sexual violence in conflict brutally reinforces the notion that women are not equal to men, and that they can be violated with total impunity. Achieving sustainable peace and the elimination of sexual violence in conflict will continue to be impossible if the root causes of inequality are not addressed. In practice, that means ensuring women's equality at every stage of the peace process and that all peace agreements include effective responses to crimes committed against women. And that means including guarantees of women's human rights in the content of peace agreements, stating that sexual violence violates ceasefire agreements, and forbidding amnesty for sexual crimes. Forceful action must be taken on this issue, particularly in order to ensure that the international community rejects peace agreements lacking women's participation and involvement, and also that political processes ensure that women's human rights are protected and that women representatives are included in the decision-making process.

The prevention of sexual violence in conflict and of the underlying causes of conflict itself is the most powerful instrument we have. As the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2013/149) demonstrates, and as I myself saw in Mali in recent months, there is a devastating link between the flow of arms and the perpetration of sexual violence. The members of the NGO Working Group have campaigned for an arms trade treaty that takes into account the problems associated with discrimination against women, not because women are vulnerable but because we are targets. It is now up to Member States to recognize how much the availability of arms affects violence against women and women's participation in social and political life. We call on States to uphold their commitments regarding women and peace and security in all disarmament processes.

In cases of sexual violence, the response to victims and survivors is crucial. Survivors and their families have the right to adequately funded medical, psychological and legal support and rehabilitation programmes. Without such services, victims' physical and mental health can be irreparably damaged. Besides that, impunity for perpetrators too often remains the norm. In Mali, the 2012 military coup d'état drove many of those providing services for victims out of the country, leaving survivors without access to emergency medical services or to any psychological help. With the support of UN-Women, my organization, the Association of Malian Jurists, and some others were able to partially fill that gap. But the political crisis highlights just how precarious the situation remains for survivors and service providers. In addition, with services mainly concentrated in Bamako, many female victims of the conflict in the north of the country were unable to get help.

Comprehensive services, from medical to psychological to legal, must be available, safe and easily accessible by the victims. Medical care for survivors must be of the highest quality possible and provided in accordance with international humanitarian law and World Health Organization guidelines, while recognizing the right of women and girls to non-discriminatory medical care, including the right to terminate a pregnancy resulting from rape.

With regard to accountability and reparations, impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence, unfortunately, remains overwhelmingly the norm. In the context of conflict, the reform of the security and justice sectors must ensure that crimes of sexual violence are effectively addressed and responded to. Every recourse to justice, including referrals to the International Criminal Court, should be pursued. Reparations, as the Secretary-General's report says, can be an important form of transitional justice for all victimes of sexual violence, especially women and girls, and an important tool for redress and acknowledgement of suffering borne. Such efforts should include activities aimed at combating the stigma that accompanies crimes of sexual violence. In Mali, for example, we need collective recognition of the crimes of sexual violence that have been committed during the conflict. In the absence of such recognition, women who attempt to seek justice often have great difficulty accessing courts, and many are even accused of being prostitutes. It is imperative that survivors of sexual violence cease to be blamed and victimized when they seek assistance and justice.

Concerning support for the work of organizations headed by women, civil society plays a key role in combating sexual violence in conflict. Sufficient resources must be directed to civil-society organizations led by women, particularly those that help victims and that give women access to justice and the political decision-making process. Because of the nature of their work, defenders of women's human rights continue to be the target of attacks and threats in many parts of the world. Member States should immediately take the steps necessary to ensure that such defenders are protected and supported, and to recognize and reduce the risks they face. In that way the States Members of the United Nations, particularly those on the Security Council, can ensure that the voices of the victims of sexual violence are heard and their situation is improved.

When conflict and violence arose in Mali, we women mobilized for peace but, sadly, had neither the power nor the training needed to make our voices heard. With the assistance of international partners, including UN-Women, 80 Malian women have been trained in mediation, negotiation and mobilization — skills that are essential to ensuring that women in danger can be heard.

Today I have discussed several examples from my country, Mali, but, sadly, there are many similar examples in many other countries. In all those countries, we are aware of how we need to work together to prevent, to respond, to have accountability and to ensure that women can achieve their full potential. While we have made great strides in terms of identifying the scourge of sexual violence in conflict, we look forward with impatience to the day when the commitments made by so many of those in the Chamber bear fruit.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Keïta Diakité for her briefing.

(*spoke in English*)

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Cho Tae-yul (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for your presence here today and for convening this important debate. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for their informative and insightful briefings. My special thanks also go to Ms. Saran Keïta Diakité for her statement on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

The Security Council has achieved significant progress in combating conflict-related sexual violence over the past few years, including by adopting resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010). While those documents reaffirm our strong commitment to ending sexual violence in conflict, this egregious crime remains a daunting challenge for the international community in many new and ongoing armed conflicts.

In that context, my delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149). It shows that sexual violence continues to occur in conflict and post-conflict situations throughout the world, and that in some cases such acts have become systematic and widespread. The report also reveals worrying emerging trends, such as the nexus between sexual violence and the illicit extraction of natural resources and the displacement of civilian populations. What is more worrying is that sexual violence is almost universally under-reported. Against that backdrop, my delegation would like to stress following key points.

First, we would like to underline the significance of the fight against impunity. We can never expect to eradicate sexual violence without ensuring that those responsible are systematically brought to justice. We strongly support the Secretary-General's recommendation in his report that the Council employ all the means at its disposal to address sexual violence in conflict, including referrals to the International Criminal Court and mandating international commissions of inquiry.

Ensuring accountability at the national level is equally important. However, it is regrettable that the lack of adequate national capacity to investigate and prosecute sexual violence remains one of the main impediments to ensuring accountability for such crimes. In that regard, my delegation would like to commend the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, established pursuant to resolution 1888 (2009). We further encourage the Team to focus its efforts on strengthening institutional safeguards against impunity at the national level.

Secondly, we need to be more systematic in incorporating the issue of conflict-related sexual violence into the work of the Security Council. The Council, for its part, should give due attention and consideration to sexual violence in authorizing and renewing the mandates of peacekeeping and special political missions through the inclusion of specific language on that issue. Furthermore, the deployment of women's protection advisers to United Nations missions should continue to be encouraged.

My delegation also believes that the adoption of targeted measures by the relevant Sanctions Committees against perpetrators of sexual violence crimes is another crucial means at the Council's disposal. It serves as a strong deterrent to conflict-related sexual violence by raising the stakes for perpetrators. We welcome the fact that the Democratic Republic of the Congo Sanctions Committee imposed measures on those responsible for committing sexual violence last year. My delegation would like to encourage other Sanctions Committees to similarly focus on sexual violence crimes. The list of parties that are credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflicts, contained in the Secretary-General's report, could be a good basis for such action by the Council.

Thirdly, we need to pay more attention and care to victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. Priority should be given to providing them with sustainable assistance, including medical, psychological, legal and other multisectoral services. Those services should be tailored to the specific needs of survivors. To that end, it is imperative to strengthen the capacities of the relevant national institutions and allocate adequate resources to the relevant programmes.

In that regard, we support the Secretary-General's recommendation to ensure that reparations awarded through judicial or administrative mechanisms be established and made available to victims of sexual violence in conflict. It is particularly important that post-conflict reconstruction processes strengthen overall systems for reparation, including the provision of adequate and timely resources.

As a member of the Group of Friends of resolution 1325 (2000), the Republic of Korea has been actively engaged in international efforts to combat conflict-related sexual violence. In that context, my delegation welcomes the timely adoption of the declaration on preventing sexual violence in conflict by the Foreign Ministers of the Group of Eight (G-8) last Thursday in London. As the ministers of the G-8 recognized in the declaration, efforts to address sexual violence in armed conflict should be consistent with resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the declaration highlights the importance of wider efforts to promote better implementation of the relevant resolutions.

To that end, the Korean Government is also working on a draft national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), with the involvement of all the relevant ministries and in close consultation with civil society. The plan is expected to include measures to combat conflict-related sexual violence and to provide assistance to the victims and survivors of sexual violence in conflicts.

Before concluding, my delegation would like to commend the tremendous efforts of Special Representative Bangura and her exemplary dedication to the fight against conflict-related sexual violence. We extend our full support for her mandate. The Republic of Korea will continue to be committed to implementing all resolutions to eradicate conflict-related sexual violence in cooperation with the international community.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): I should like to thank you, Madam President, for organizing this event and for your presence here today. Let me also thank you for the expression of sympathy to the American people. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, for their briefings. I also thank Ms. Keïta Diakité for helping us better understand how women in Mali are combatting sexual violence. Women's civil society organizations are making critical contributions in that area and need our support.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149). Tragically, the report and today's briefings remind us that this issue is a global problem. It is also complex and multifaceted — from sexual violence used as a tool for coercive population displacement to forced marriages by armed groups and the challenges of the widespread unreporting of abuse and the plight of children born out of rape.

Today, I would like to draw attention to the need for greater emphasis on prevention, including at the communal level and within the United Nations system, for engaging parties to conflict to address sexual violence and for integrating sexual violence prevention and response efforts into security and justice sector reform. At the community level, improving the prevention of sexual violence requires a better understanding of existing protection mechanisms and leveraging grass-roots networks that can provide local information to inform prevention efforts. There is progress in that area: for example, the community policing centres run by displaced persons in camps in Darfur and the enlistment of imams as advocates for sexual violence prevention in South Darfur.

For United Nations missions, better prevention involves equipping peacekeepers and civilian staff with the guidance and expertise to respond to early information about threats of large-scale abuses. The training modules designed by the United Nations are a positive step in that direction, as is the creation of a United Nations international network of female police peacekeepers, which links more than 1,000 United Nations female police officers around the world to share best practices and advocate and mentor female police.

Bringing deeper gender expertise to United Nations field missions is essential for the enhanced prevention of sexual violence. United Nations leadership in New York and in the field should commit to a greater presence of gender experts and women protection advisers in United Nations missions. Furthermore, the deployment of such experts should be routine in United Nations technical assessment missions. We note a particular need for that expertise in Libya to address the root causes of sexual violence perpetrated during the conflict and the resulting trauma. Encouraging parties to conflict to discuss sexual violence within their ranks, although challenging, is another critical avenue of prevention. The agreements that Special Representative Bangura brokered in the Central African Republic are models of such engagement.

Changing the behaviour of armed parties requires political will, as well as better monitoring and reporting and, where appropriate, the credible threat of consequences, such as naming and shaming and sanctions. Furthermore, mediators and envoys should routinely address conflict-related sexual violence in their ceasefire and peace negotiations. But the spectrum of action for countering sexual violence must not be limited to a conflict and its conclusion. It must be prioritized throughout the peace processes, including in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration phase and in security sector reform. Rigorous vetting should ensure that perpetrators and those who have directed sexual violence are denied entry to the security sector. There should be strong protection mechanisms for civilians in close proximity of cantonment sites.

The best way to ensure such protection is for women themselves to participate meaningfully in security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme design and implementation and to have more women working and leading in the security sector. It is clear that female survivors of sexual violence are more likely to report to a female police officer or a women's police station, as our experience in Haiti has borne out. Women's civil society organizations need greater capacity to monitor, inform and provide security services in conjunction with law enforcement authorities. We must also build reformed national justice sectors and local institutions that can hold accountable those responsible for sexual violence, while international criminal justice mechanisms continue to play their important role in ending impunity for those crimes.

Last week, in its declaration on preventing sexual violence in conflict, the Group of Eight reaffirmed that rape and other forms of serious sexual violence in armed conflict were war crimes and emphasized the need to promote justice and accountability for such crimes.

These issues are hardly theoretical. The scourge of sexual violence persists. We are alarmed by the horrific abuses occurring in Syria, including against men and boys, and we affirm that those responsible for violations of human rights will be held accountable. The United States continues to support the documenting of evidence of atrocities committed by all sides for use in future Syrian-led transitional justice and accountability processes.

Beyond Syria, the United States has proven its commitment to prevent and address gender-based violence around the world, providing more than $100 billion in 2012 for those efforts.

In conclusion, I wish to commend the excellent work that Special Representative Bangura and her staff are doing. I urge the entire United Nations system to give due attention to prevention efforts and facilitate the deployment of necessary expertise to conflict areas. The United States looks forward to continuing collaboration with all those who seek to end the scourge of sexual violence in conflict, including through a new Council resolution to address outstanding challenges on these issues.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank Rwanda for the initiative of holding today's open debate. I welcome the presence of Her Excellency Ms. Louise Mushikiwabo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Rwanda, to preside over today's meeting. I also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bangura for their briefings. China also listened attentively to the statement made by the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

Respecting and protecting women's rights is not only a reflection of progress in human society and civilization, it is also closely linked to global peace and development. Women are vulnerable to becoming victims of all sorts of violence in situations of armed conflict. Not only is that a grave infringement upon women's rights, but it is also a challenge to the full resolution of conflicts and the rebuilding of society.

In recent years, States Members of the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations have cooperated closely to fight sexual violence in armed conflict. China welcomes that. At the same time, in today's many conflict situations, sexual violence against women remains prevalent. The international community has a long way to go in defending women's security, rights and interests.

China condemns all violence against women in armed conflict, including sexual violence. China supports the full implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Council and urges parties in conflict to abide by international humanitarian law and other relevant international law to effectively protect the safety of women and other disadvantaged groups. I would like to emphasize three points.

First, in all countries, it is the Government that bears the primary responsibility for women's safety and rights. Conflict situations are all different. The international community should support the countries concerned in their efforts to safeguard women's rights and interests and should provide constructive assistance in that regard. External support should fully respect the sovereignty of the countries concerned, focus on enhancing their capacity-building and help them to resolve funding and technical difficulties.

Secondly, the United Nations should play its unique role fully and enhance cooperation and coordination with other relevant bodies. The Security Council, as the primary body tasked with maintaining peace and security, should focus on conflict prevention, dispute mediation and post-conflict peacebuilding, so as to create political, security and legal environments conducive to eliminating sexual violence. The General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council and UN-Women should coordinate their efforts and cooperate closely with the Security Council to foster synergy.

Thirdly, safeguarding women's rights and preventing and containing sexual violence in conflict require the full development of women. The international community cannot just pay attention to the phenomenon of sexual violence in conflict, demanding increased pressure and punishment and the establishment of monitoring mechanisms; it should also eliminate the sources of conflict, devote major attention to economic and social development, advance the status of women in real terms and make the empowerment of women a reality.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Rwandan presidency for convening this important open debate. It is particularly relevant that our debate is being chaired by Minister Louise Mushikiwabo, to whom we convey our thanks. We also thank the Secretary-General for the presentation of his report (S/2013/149). We are very aware of his commitment to combating sexual violence in armed conflict.

We also welcome Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura and commend her on the great work she is carrying out in her role. We thank her for the compelling presentation of her report on her recent visit to Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It demonstrates how extensive and serious, at least in those two countries, sexual crimes, including rape as a weapon of war, are.

We also thank Ms. Saran Keïta Diakité for her moving statement.

We recognize the importance of mediators and envoys in mediation, ceasefire, peace and preventive diplomacy processes engaging with the parties to a conflict in dialogue on sexual violence, and for such violence to be addressed in peace agreements. We agree with the recommendation of the Secretary-General that sexual violence should be included among prohibited acts and reflected as specific provisions in peace agreements related to security arrangements and transitional justice. It should be recalled, in that regard, that the Organization has developed guidelines for mediators on how to address sexual violence in armed conflicts. Those should be included in the training and orientation of teams that negotiate ceasefires and peace agreements.

We have participated in several informative events conducted by agencies of the system and non-governmental organizations that work in areas of armed conflict. The stories they tell are frightening and reinforce the urgent need for victims and survivors of sexual violence to have access to medical services and HIV-related treatment and care. It is also necessary to address the difficult situations faced by survivors who have children and by the children born as a result of rape, who then become victims of stigma and social exclusion.

We are highly aware of the priority that must be given to developing and building the capacity of national institutions, in particular the health, judicial and social welfare systems, as well as local civil society networks. That is certainly an area where public-private partnerships are of particular relevance.

It is also worth mentioning the critical role of women's civil society organizations in supporting the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts and in peacebuilding. That was precisely the approach taken in the presidential statement (S/PRST/2012/23) adopted under our presidency of the Security Council in October 2012. In that statement, as part of the fight against impunity for perpetrators of sexual and gender-based crimes, the Council categorically condemned all violations of international law committed against women and girls in armed conflict and post-conflict situations.

Guatemala has supported without reservation the work that the Security Council has been carrying out for several years now aimed at strengthening collective action to combat sexual violence in armed conflict, in particular through the adoption of resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010). Now, as elected members of the Council, we find that our commitment has been further deepened.

In that regard, we are encouraged by the important change in how sexual violence is being dealt with by the International Criminal Court, in particular with respect to the charges against Bosco Ntaganda of crimes against humanity, rape, sexual slavery and war crimes. The same could be said about the prosecution of Jean-Pierre Bemba. Both cases set a precedent concerning the principle of officers' responsibility for sexual violence as a war crime and crime against humanity. That constitutes an important complement to the work of national courts and mixed tribunals in the fight against deeply rooted discriminatory practices that are embedded in a culture of impunity.

In addition, it helps us to combat the perception that it is useless to denounce the crimes of sexual violence and contributes to the strengthening of the administration of justice, whether civil or military, by holding perpetrators accountable before the law. Moreover, it also helps to realize specific commitments on prohibiting sexual violence committed by senior-ranking officials of armed forces and armed groups, and promotes the adoption of codes of conduct that prohibit sexual violence.

We believe that another step in the right direction is the judgment in the case of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo. Although he was not charged with crimes of sexual slavery and rape, the judgment against him includes specific guidance on the reparations to be made to the victims of sexual violence, thus making possible specific reparation for the immediate and long-term harm experienced by the victims. That act of international justice affords hope, dignity and compensation to the victims and enforces accountability for the perpetrators.

What I have referred to leads us to conclude that the annex to the report of the Secretary-General, which lists the parties and individuals credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for systematic rape and other forms of sexual violence during conflict and post-conflict situations, is useful, and that we must increase the pressure on those responsible for those acts and, when appropriate, submit their names to the relevant committees.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for having organized this open debate and for your presence here, which shows your commitment to this issue. I would also welcome the statements by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura. We welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/149) and would like to highlight its clear, concise and strategic nature. We also welcome Ms. Keïta Diakité, and we take note of and appreciate the presence of the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the work of the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We commend Ms. Bangura for her efforts since taking up her responsibilities, including the services provided by the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. We fully support the recommendations contained in the report.

My country aligns itself with and supports the proposal to establish an appropriate monitoring mechanism within the Security Council on the problem of sexual violence in conflict.

In 2012, the United Nations stated that, whatever the geography of conflict and its structural causes, from Côte d'Ivoire to Mali and from Libya to those affected by the earthquake in Haiti — in every instance — over 70 per cent of those displaced were been women and children. We know that women in camps, women refugees and displaced women are particularly at risk of becoming victims of violence, exploitation and poverty. However, just as clearly, we do not accept that that should be their fate.

We note that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has introduced a robust policy on women refugees, has prepared action guidelines for the protection of women refugees and will continue to include the gender dimension in its assistance and protection work.

However, with the same firmness with which we require comprehensive protection for victims, we would like to say that it is vital that women be included in all decisions that affect their lives, as participation promotes protection.

Resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, together with other Council resolutions, signified and still represents a huge breakthrough. In that resolution, the Council recognized the fundamental role that women played in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding. It underlined the importance of effective and equal participation by women in the maintenance of peace and security and the need to include women, under equal conditions, in decision-making processes for the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

However, UN-Women recently announced that, of the 585 peace agreements signed between 1990 and 2010, only 16 per cent mentioned women. Seventeen per cent refer to gender equality, and only 3 per cent make any reference at all to gender-based sexual violence.

We are aware that there is much more to do. It is terrible and painful to acknowledge that women and girls have been and remain the main victims of violence in armed conflicts, specifically of sexual and gender-based violence. It is particularly serious that such violence is often abetted by the indifference and complicity of those responsible for protecting civilians — and women and children — who may include members of a State's armed and security forces, peacekeeping operations or non-governmental organization volunteers working in the field.

That is why we agree with the idea that all peacekeeping mandates should explicitly include the gender perspective in the protection of civilians and incorporate specific guidelines on preventing, eradicating and punishing all forms of violence against women, with a focus on human rights, as well as a full and multidimensional understanding of that scourge. We also support the idea of a special adviser for all peacekeeping missions in the area of human rights for women and gender and ensuring the resources necessary to effectively implement the Council's resolutions and incorporate follow-up mechanisms for the analysis and presentation of reports on violence against women, particularly sexual violence. The impact of conflicts on women is not only determined by the nature or level of the conflict, but also by the particular role of each women

It is also true that the general needs of women must be recognized, as that is fundamental in meeting the specific diverse and multifaceted needs of women. We must understand the local and cultural context, which is crucial to understanding and responding to conflict-related violence.

We agree with the need for security-sector reform, which should include training in human rights, particularly the human rights of women and children, and take into account the need to prevent sexual violence.

We encourage the training of peacekeepers, both civilian and military and police, and the strengthening of the human rights component, particularly with regard to women's and children's human rights, as well as comprehensively addressing the various forms of violence against women, particularly sexual violence.

We agree with the need for a human rights focus in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, as well as in mediation, ceasefire, peace and preventive diplomacy processes, with an intensified focus on women and girls. In that respect, we believe that women's participation in all consultation and decision-making processes should not be the exception, but rather the rule. As women, our role in conflicts is not passive, nor is it exclusively or necessarily that of victims.

Allow me to refer to work that has been carried out in my country, known as "Cracks in the Silence", by the women's organization CLADEM, which has investigated sexual violence against women during the period of State terrorism in my country. The investigation helped to reveal the sexual crimes committed during that cruel and painful period. It showed that those crimes had been broadly suppressed and made invisible; not only because seeking justice for individual crimes of sexual violence as individual cases and crimes against humanity — they are not like crimes of torture or abuse — was a difficult and complex process, but because it was also necessary to confront and overcome enormous cultural, political and institutional obstacles in determining the criminal responsibility of the perpetrators of the crimes and reparations for the victims.

In that context, the recommendations issued by the Human Rights Committee to Argentina on bringing the crimes of the recent dictatorship to trial covered gender-based crimes as well. The Committee noted that the State party should continue to make rigorous efforts to prosecute those cases in order to guarantee that serious human rights violations, including those crimes that deprived women of their right to liberty and a life free of violence, not go unpunished.

We can also cite, in that connection, the recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women with regard to proactive measures to publicize trials and punishment for sexual violence perpetrated during dictatorships or conflicts.

One can say, without exaggeration, that, during times of conflict, very few women have been able to chronicle the sexual violence of which they were victims. That was clearly seen when the International Criminal Tribunal for your country, Madam President, pointed out in the *Akayesu* case, that cultural sensitivities have a bearing on the discussion of intimate matters. That case, which related to sexuality, revealed the pain, the reticence and the inability of the women concerned to reveal details of sexual violence of which they had been victims.

We also know that feelings not only of guilt, but also of humiliation, contribute to silence. Internalized social shame takes hold of women who have been victims of sexual violence, because sexuality is considered an intimate and private domain. To speak publicly about such things indicates that everybody knows that the victims have been humiliated, violated, raped and forced to submit.

On the other hand, the generalized indifference in investigating acts of violence against women leads directly to impunity, increasing the situation of insecurity and fear among women.

In that respect, the Commission to Clarify Past Human Rights Violations and Acts of Violence That Have Caused the Guatemalan Population to Suffer indicated in its final report that the absolute impunity protecting those responsible for sexual violations increased women's insecurity and contributed to the victims' not reporting the facts.

We cannot explain why sexual violence against women and sexist and gender-based violence has occurred with growing and overwhelming frequency in armed conflicts, unless we also add to the equation the inequality between men and women, gender stereotypes and the reproduction of hierarchical and discriminatory relationships in which women find themselves materially subordinate and symbolically devalued in various times and cultures.

Women do not become victims by virtue of who they are, or as the result of nature or fate. Women are particularly susceptible to becoming victims of violence in conflict most especially because we are already victims of discrimination during peaceful times.

In conclusion, allow me to refer briefly to sexual violence in conflicts and to the autonomous nature, specificity and separate nature of sexual crimes, and how they should be viewed differently from other crimes such as torture or cruelty.

It is apposite, because as we have seen in recent conflicts, specific and systematic forms of sexual violence are carried out against women, young women and girls. In that connection, I would like to share with the Council the testimony of a social activist who, for the simple act of thinking and saying that the world is unjust and unequal, was disappeared, tortured and raped during the recent civilian military dictatorship in my country.

> "During torture, one discovered that we had resources to withstand very high thresholds of pain, somehow to survive and to live. However, rape is something else. It affects other elements — and they know it because, in addition to the evident, there is an immeasurable amount of inner pain that is not seen like the bruises left by the blows or the burns from the electric shocks, but it is there. It is as if one's body freezes or becomes that of another person, not only at the time but for ever, for life."

We have made progress in jurisprudence. We have made progress in recognizing rights. We must now bring about real equality and the effective eradication of all forms of violence against women.

I think that remembering, truth, justice and reparation — I say that to you, Madam President, in particular — is the only way to put an end to impunity. Certainly, Rwanda, Argentina and all countries that have suffered extreme violence know that remembering is the basis for moving forward in order to prevent the repetition of such events today, tomorrow, yesterday and forever.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): We thank Rwanda for convening this open debate on women and peace and security. Your presence here, Madam President, shows your country's strong commitment to addressing the scourge of sexual violence in wars and in situations of armed conflict. We welcome Vice-Minister Cho Tae-yul's attendance at the Council debate today.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing to the Council. The Secretary-General has placed women's protection issues high on his agenda and has put the power of the United Nations behind the efforts to combat heinous acts of violence against women.

Women bear the brunt of wars and armed conflicts. Today, 90 per cent of the casualties in conflicts and wars are non-combatants, of whom 70 per cent are women and children. Moreover, women are left out of peacemaking, stabilization and reconstruction processes.

Women and girls are targeted deliberately. Sexual and gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict affects the dignity not only of victims and survivors but also of families, communities and societies. It causes moral and psychosocial injury and is used as a tactic of war to force the displacement of populations and to illegally acquire natural resources.

Resolution 1325 (2000) recognized that disproportionate impact on women and introduced remedial measures. Member States have resolved to collectively oppose and fight the unconscionable practices of rape, sexual slavery, commercial sexual exploitation, forced pregnancies, enforced sterilization and other forms of sexual violence.

We welcome Special Representative Zainab Hawa Bangura's exhaustive briefing today. We pay tribute to her for her solid work and for the passion with which she pursues her mission. We appreciate the presence and testimony of the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. Civil society has a crucial role in protecting the rights of women in conflict situations.

The United Nations does much to deal with the protection of women in situations of armed conflict. We all know that that is not enough. Much more needs to be done. It is imperative to continue to mainstream the gender perspective into peacekeeping operations. As the largest troop-contributing country, we can testify to the fact that the appointment of gender advisers in the field has served a useful purpose. That practice must be strengthened. We are proud of our women peacekeepers, who have served as police officers, doctors and nurses in peacekeeping operations in Asia, Africa and the Balkans. We have made gender sensitization a mandatory part of the training of our peacekeepers.

Over the years, the Security Council has paid close attention to the cause of protecting the human rights of vulnerable groups in situations of armed conflict. The issue of women and peace and security has been integrated into the Council's country-specific resolutions. That increased emphasis has resulted in a normative framework that is reflected in a series of resolutions on women and children, as well as the creation of the posts of special representatives of the Secretary-General to deal with the issues of children and sexual violence. The Secretary-General has reflected those concerns in various reports. Over time, communication among the field offices, the Secretariat and the Council has also improved.

Such mechanisms and measures have provided relief and justice to the affected populations, but it is a long haul. In that context, we support Special Representative Bangura's call to all parties to conflicts to immediately put an end to violence against women and make specific, time-bound commitments to ensure the non-recurrence of such acts, under the appropriate monitoring mechanisms.

The six-point priority agenda of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General is a good way to address impunity, empower women to seek redress, strengthen the international political response and foster national ownership. Moreover, the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) will meaningfully address the plight of women and will elevate their status to equal partners in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, post-conflict reconstruction, peace and security. Women should participate in recovery and peacebuilding, as well as transitional justice systems.

The Council has set a good example by sending strong signals that sexual and gender-based violence is unacceptable. We should give due credit to the Security Council for transforming the protection of women in armed conflict situations from a soft to a hard issue. Full compliance with international humanitarian law, an end to impunity, and accountability for the perpetrators of crimes against women, including in transitional justice mechanisms, are now widely accepted norms of international law.

In order to give more credence to its actions, the Council must be ready to take targeted and graduated measures, through the relevant Sanctions Committees, against perpetrators of sexual violence. We endorse the Secretary-General's recommendation of applying specific sanctions against parties to armed conflict that use sexual violence as a tactic of war.

We believe that the Member States concerned bear the primary legal and moral responsibility for preventing and addressing sexual violence. We urge the Special Representative to continue to work closely with Member States and regional organizations to ensure that such concerns are addressed.

The continued appointment of trained gender and women protection advisers and the provision of multisectoral assistance and services for victims have proved beneficial. Adequate resources must be allocated for that purpose.

We support the Special Representative's call to strengthen national institutions in order to provide sustainable assistance to victims of sexual violence. Technical assistance may be provided, on request, to concerned States for reforming and rebuilding the judicial, legislative and electoral sectors, as well as for the economic, social and political empowerment of women.

In conclusion, I would say that punitive measures do not provide all the answers. We must invest in consciousness-raising, dialogue and engagement. Societies in conflict must address the root causes, resolve their differences and avoid hurting their own communities and nations or fellow human beings across borders. Humanity and humanitarianism, not primordial barbarism, must prevail.

Mr. Briens (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for having convened this debate. I also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura; and Ms. Saran Keïta Diakité, representative of civil society of Mali.

Sexual violence has been a part of all wars in history but, as the Group of Eight recalled in its ministerial statement of 11 April, it has long been seen as an unimportant and secondary issue that does not merit the international community's attention. Sexual violence was never taken into account in the context of conflict resolution or after conflicts. In adopting resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), the Security Council resisted that fate. It took up the issue and broke the silence that hung over that abominable crime.

Since then, significant progress has been made — political progress, first and foremost, thanks to the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. I welcome her commitment, which has made it possible to increase the international visibility of the issue.

There has also been institutional progress, with the monitoring and reporting mechanism on sexual violence, upon which the annual reports of the Secretary-General are based. Those reports provide the Council with valuable tools for following up on those crimes. In particular, the "list of shame" of parties committing systematic and orchestrated acts of sexual violence gives United Nations missions a solid basis for engaging a dialogue with those groups.

Finally, with regard to legal progress, the ad hoc tribunals created by the Council, and then the International Criminal Court (ICC), have included acts of sexual violence among the crimes within their jurisdiction. They have been recognized as war crimes, crimes against humanity and acts of genocide.

That progress was recently confirmed by the Arms Trade Treaty, adopted by the General Assembly on 2 April, which contains provisions against gender-based violence. France vigorously supported that part of the Treaty.

France also welcomes the zero-tolerance policy for United Nations personnel implemented by the Secretary-General, a policy that should be tirelessly pursued. Similarly, we support the Secretary-General's due diligence policy, his policy of screening peacekeeping and political mission staff with regard to respect for human rights, as well as his policy on restricting contact with persons being sought by the ICC. The Secretary-General has thereby confirmed his commitment to the accountability of the Organization.

Despite that progress, we have no other choice but to deplore the scope and frequency of sexual violence in conflicts, which is continually being used as a weapon to terrorize civilian populations. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in spite of the mobilization of the international community, sexual violence remains omnipresent. Committed by all parties, sexual violence is also perpetuated within the Congolese army, particularly because of shortcomings in the screening, selection and training processes for ex-militia integrated into the Congolese forces. The response to the Minova tragedy should stand as an example. The Congolese authorities must do more, and more quickly, to punish the guilty. They must also take a determined and convincing stand for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and security sector reform programmes.

Brave men and women are fighting to end the violence and help the survivors. In that regard, we must pay tribute to the tireless work of Dr. Mukwege and his teams, who have risked their own lives to treat victims of sexual violence in the Congo. They must be heard, supported and protected.

Furthermore, we expect that the Intervention Brigade established under resolution 2098 (2013) will help strengthen the work of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to protect civilians by helping to neutralize and disarm the militias that are threatening populations, and that it will work effectively with the Congolese authorities to arrest the criminals.

In Syria, the regime and its supporters are systematically using sexual violence to intimidate civilians and to get them to flee. Those crimes may be added to the long list of those committed by the Syrian armed forces against their own people. France believes that the referral of the matter to the ICC is amply justified.

After the defeat of the armed groups in northern Mali, justice must follow its course for the victims of sexual violence. The matter has been referred to the ICC. Legal and psychological assistance will need to be provided to victims and survivors. With the assistance of the United Nations, the Malian authorities cannot choose to overlook the issue.

We are concerned by the teterioration of the security situation in the Central African Republic, where armed groups are guilty of kidnapping and sexual exploitation. Those crimes must stop, and the guilty parties must be pursued.

To deal with sexual violence, a number of challenges need to be addressed. Protection, sanctions and prevention must be our watchwords.

Protection is first. On the ground, women's protection advisers are bringing greater awareness of sexual violence issues to the daily work of the Blue Helmets. Their role is crucial, and France hopes that their deployment within peacekeeping missions and political missions will be expanded. Above all, when they have the mandate to do so, missions should provide the resources necessary to help the work of these advisers.

With respect to sanctions, in order for victims to no longer be stigmatized for the crimes they have suffered, we must do away with impunity for sexual violence. National Governments have the primary responsibility to prosecute and punish perpetrators of such crimes. When States fail to uphold their responsibilities, the International Criminal Court should play its role in full. France welcomes the exemplary cooperation between the Court and the countries concerned that led to the transfer to The Hague of Mr. Bosco Ntganda.

To protect, to sanction and, finally, to prevent — for that, the participation of women in the resolution of conflicts represents a basic element. It will, for example, be a significant dimension for reconciliation in Mali, which France took into account in the draft resolution currently being discussed.

France, within the framework of its national action plan for implementing resolution 1325 (2000), on women, peace and security, is financing anti-violence programmes in six countries in Africa and the Arab world being implemented by UN-Women. The staff we are sending abroad from our country are trained in issues of sexual violence, and we support the integration of gender issues in peacekeeping schools in Africa.

The Council can be assured of our commitment and determination in promoting and defending the rights of women and girls throughout the world, as well as in implementing resolutions on women, peace and security.

Mr. Kandangha-Bariki (Togo) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, I want to thank your country, the Republic of Rwanda, for having organized today's debate on the issue of women and peace and security, as well as to welcome your presence here among us to lead this work. I would also like to welcome the Secretary-General, whose presence indicates the level of concern of the United Nations with regard to violence against women. We also welcome the presence of the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea. We congratulate Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General dealing with sexual violence committed in times of armed conflict, for her commitment to consolidating the progress made in the programme of action established by her predecessor. We reiterate to her our full support.

Similarly, I would like to thank Ms. Keïta Diakité, who gave us a clear briefing on the situation with regard to women in West Africa, and particularly in Mali.

Sexual violence today has reached an intolerable level. In fact, women and girls are victims of all kinds of violence, particularly rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, pregnancy or forced sterilization, forced marriage, kidnappings and many other form of violence. The number of victims of sexual violence has increased, particularly in Africa with the appearance of new armed groups, such as the Mouvement du 23 Mars, the Mai-Mai Morgan, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and the rebel Séléka coalition.

Sometimes, the Government forces of countries in conflict have themselves also committed the same violations. Rape has become a war strategy aimed at humiliating the enemy and establishing domination. The figures relating to violence against women and girls are considerable, particularly in the Central African Republic, where the rebels of the Séléka coalition and the Lords Resistance Army operate. In Mali, for example, we have also seen an increase in the number of crimes of sexual violence at a time when the northern region of the country was occupied by rebel groups. Several dozen cases of sexual violence have been reported.

We cannot fail to mention the situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where for several years women and children have been the favourite targets of armed groups. The atrocities committed are sometimes impossible to describe — simply horrific. Given those unimaginable atrocities, we must ask ourselves why this is happening. Looking for the underlying causes for the violence leads us to deduce that it is basically linked to economic and social considerations. Because of economic factors, armed groups have resorted to organized sexual violence so as to force the displacement of populations in order to pillage the natural resources of the regions where they operate. Likewise, they engage in violence against entire communities, often on the basis of race, ethnicity or religion, with the aim of establishing the domination of their own ethnic group in order to satisfy their political ambitions.

Another question that we ask ourselves pertains to the reasons for the persistence of these serious violations of human rights and the exponential increase in the number of victims. There are sociological reasons, first of all, which are linked to the refusal of women and girls to report the facts to the authorities because of their fear of reprisals, stigmatization or being punished or rejected by their spouses or their communities.

It appears to us, then, that one of the reasons has to do with the fact that the parties to the conflict do not respect their obligations under the relevant international legal instruments in the area of humanitarian law and human rights in times of armed conflict, in particular the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their 1977 Protocol. It has also been seen that States parties to a number of conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and its optional protocol and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocol, lack the political will to implement the relevant provisions. Moreover, a number of Security Council resolutions and presidential statements are not being applied by States, especially not by the belligerents. They are simply ignored by the parties involved despite the fact that they have full responsibility to implement them.

Finally — and this is not an exhaustive list — the early-warning mechanisms established in peacekeeping operations show that they are limited in their ability to effectively protect women and girls in times of armed conflict. For all of those reasons, it is important that the measures already undertaken by the United Nations be strengthened in order to ensure respect for all the relevant instruments and resolutions through, among other things, the firm commitment on the part of States to shoulder their responsibilities and deal with those involved in serious violations of human rights.

Impunity cannot be the rule. In that regard, the United Nations must help States to establish appropriate cooperation mechanisms, particularly through bilateral or regional extradition agreements to deal with perpetrators. Effective mechanisms must also be put into place that take into account the needs of women who have been victims of sexual violence, who are often abandoned to their fate.

The international community, above all the United Nations, must become more involved on a legal level in the search for solutions to the problems raised by the commission of these horrific sexual crimes, particularly rape. That means that they must encourage recourse to national courts or international courts competent in that area to apprehend the perpetrators and thus fight against impunity. Unfortunately, in this area, the justice system itself has many problems for various reasons, including the fact that the judicial system is often slow and not independent. The international investigation commissions do not always have sufficient funds to adequately establish the facts. There is also a lack of cooperation between States and international jurisdictions with regard to the implementation of the international arrest warrants and other decisions.

Despite all of those difficulties and obstacles, we can say that courageous action has been carried out by the United Nations, particularly by UN-Women, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and a number of international and non-governmental organizations. Togo commends all of those efforts undertaken to fight against this scourge and welcomes the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/149).

Togo also believes that the international community should become mobilized to an even greater extent to put an end to the scourge, as it has done in the case of the fight against major diseases. In that regard, several measures should be taken.

First, we should seek to promote a change in the sociocultural behaviour of men towards women. We should eradicate preconceptions, customs and traditions and all other practices based on the idea that women are inferior, which have led to their being used as objects during periods of armed conflict.

Secondly, we should encourage all members of society, particularly men and boys, to actively contribute to the prevention of all forms of violence during times of peace.

Thirdly, we should promote or regularly conduct, at all levels, campaigns and programmes to increase the awareness and understanding among the public at large of the different forms and consequences of the various forms of violence against women, especially sexual violence, which has serious consequences for women, society and development.

Fourthly, we should promote cooperation between international jurisdictions and national courts in order to track down, arrest and bring to justice the perpetrators of violence in order to put an end to the culture of impunity.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to once again welcome you, Madam Minister, as you preside over this meeting, which we thank you for organizing. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflicts, Ms. Bangura. As we can see, thanks to her persistence and commitment to the goal of eradicating sexual violence, the Special Representative has managed, in less than a year, to do quite a bit.

The consideration of the issues relating to women and peace and security should be based on a comprehensive approach, as set forth in the Council's baseline resolution on the matter, namely, resolution 1325 (2000). The varied nature of the violence that occurs during armed conflict requires that attention be paid to all its manifestations. Unquestionably, sexual violence must be roundly condemned and severely punished. We believe this problem is very real, particularly in specific conflict situations where such crimes are becoming increasingly widespread.

However, as we know, not all such situations pose a threat to international peace and security requiring intervention on the part of the Security Council. Because of that, we feel that issues relating to preventing and combating sexual violence at every stage of armed conflict or post-conflict situations are primarily the responsibility of national Governments. Moreover, questions concerning combating sexual violence, depending on the context and within the framework of existing mandates, are handled not only by the Council but by other United Nations organs, particularly the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the Commission on the Status of Women. Artificially linking every issue of sexual violence to the work of the Security Council would lead not only to an imbalance from the standpoint of system-wide coordination but would have a negative impact on the effectiveness of work in that area. We believe that priority attention should be given to those situations on the Security Council's agenda where sexual violence is one of the primary issues in terms of the protection of civilians.

Combating sexual violence is also an important component of the range of measures needed in peace processes and post-conflict restoration. This type of crime is not a root cause of armed conflict, but rather a result of prevailing impunity. We believe that crimes committed require mandatory punishment, whether they be acts of sexual violence, terrorism or indiscriminate or disproportionate force. After all, the victims of all such acts are totally innocent people.

We have studied with interest the report of the Secretary-General for this meeting (S/2013/149). The first thing that strikes us is the document's thoroughness and the scale of the work done by the Special Representative. However, the contents of the document raises some questions. As we see it, in order to set up a genuinely credible discussion of such a sensitive issue, it is essential to act dispassionately, based on objective and reliable information. For instance, responsibility for sexual crimes in Syria is laid at the door only of the Government forces and their supporters. Analogous crimes committed by representatives of the opposition are touched on only in passing, despite the numerous assertions that have been made about them.

The principle behind the selection of the countries mentioned in various sections of the report is unclear. For instance, in the section on current and emerging concerns regarding sexual violence as it relates to international peace and security, besides countries that are on the Council's agenda, situations in a number of other States are also highlighted. It is striking that, in a significant number of the cases cited in the report of sexual violence in various parts of the world, the issue at times is not one of trends or systematic practices of sexual violence but of isolated incidents. Further investigation of many such incidents reveals that they are more likely to be criminally punishable acts committed by criminal groups, rather than war crimes.

The scope of the work done under Security Council auspices in this area was agreed to based on an intergovernmental process and enshrined in the relevant Council resolutions. We therefore feel that it involves the onsideration of issues relating to sexual violence in armed conflict. We appeal to the Special Representative to adhere to the Council's mandate in carrying out her work. We do not see a need for establishing a special procedure or body for monitoring the compliance of parties to a conflict with obligations to combat sexual violence. As we see it, the current mechanisms in this area are sufficient. First among those is the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, while the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict also plays a significant role. As I stated previously, we believe issues of sexual violence must be considered in the Security Council only in the context of the agenda item on women and peace and security, and in connection with the subject of the maintenance of peace and security.

In conclusion, we would again like to emphasize that the efforts of the international community will be in vain without the consent and active participation of national Governments, which bear the primary responsibility for dealing with the whole range of problems surrounding the protection of peoples in armed conflict.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for presiding over this meeting and for enabling us to discuss important aspects of the issue of preventing conflict twice in three days. These two debates (see S/PV.6946) are inextricably connected, given the fact that the problem of sexual violence is deeply rooted in conflict and not merely an incidental symptom of it. The short period during which these discussions have taken place has served to sow the seeds of the success of your presidency for the month of April. By the same token, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in achieving this lofty and noble goal. I would also like to thank Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as Ms. Saran Keïta Diakité of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, for their exhaustive briefings and complete and concrete efforts in this area.

We have carefully studied the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/149) in the context of today's discussion. In that connection, we would like to express our appreciation for the information it contains, as well as for its conclusions, which should give powerful impetus to and pave the way for efforts aimed at curbing sexual violence against women, children and the elderly in armed conflict. The report describes the achievements of the States concerned in complying with the relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as in taking measures to prevent sexual violence. It also mentions a number of legal and institutional obstacles that stand in the way of achieving the ideal of full protection for women and children in conflict, as well as incorporating and integrating them into the fabric of society.

The Kingdom of Morocco commends the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, particularly in the area of fostering and preserving the progress that has been made, as well as for affirming the shared responsibility of society for combating sexual violence. By the same token, we commend the United Nations initiative on combating sexual violence so as to help those working in peacekeeping operations, as well as to create partnerships between the United Nations and interested parties for strengthening national competence and skills in order to help curb sexual violence committed by parties to a conflict and to protect and support survivors. Implementing such partnerships, and the provision of adequate resources for their effective use, will contribute to achieving these humanitarian goals. By the same token, we would also like to emphasize the importance of taking into consideration the various views and standpoints, and of consulting with the relevant States concerning the establishment of early detection mechanisms for preventing sexual violence.

With regard to the implementation of reporting and oversight mechanisms — and in accordance with resolution 1960 (2010), as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General — we hope that such measures will serve as the basis for evidence-based actions. Such measures should be objective and meticulous in monitoring sexual violence in conflict and should be carried out in an atmosphere of complete objectivity and independence. They should also primarily relate to Security Council resolutions, aim at supporting international efforts to protect women and girls in conflict and underscore the importance of preventing such crimes.

With regard to prevention, the report of the Secretary-General states that the establishment of refugee camps near conflict areas and the difficulty of gaining access to them, in addition to the lack of registration records for refugees, impede efforts to safeguard refugees and to alleviate their daily suffering.

The protection of refugees is the responsibility of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and of host countries. The protection of refugees constitutes a significant part of UNHCR functions, in addition to identifying and registering them. The needs of refugees must be met and services must be provided to them to guarantee their freedom of movement and expression. They should not be subjected to humanitarian or political blackmail.

Rape and conflict-related sexual violence have deep repercussions for victims, survivors and families. The psychological, social and economic effects increase the marginalization of those groups from society with regard to their access to social and medical services. The signing of peace agreements and ceasefires by parties to a conflict should lead to developing programmes that result in an immediate cessation of sexual violence. Addressing that phenomenon is a main peacebuilding pillar agreed to by the parties.

Committing to combating impunity, implementing cooperation programmes with the judiciary to try perpetrators, and providing reparations to victims of sexual violence constitute the necessary safeguards to ensure that such crimes will not recur. Commitments in that regard must be implemented on the ground; that is a fundamental element in preventing the crimes.

In many countries, developing codes of conduct for security and police forces is very important to providing comprehensive protection from sexual violence. In that connection, I wish to acknowledge the efforts made by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict while taking into consideration factors related to national expertise and experience, with a view to reforming the judiciary and facilitating access to it for victims.

Achieving the desired objectives in curbing sexual violence requires the involvement of all parties and the efforts of public authorities, national human rights organizations and every component of civil society, including women's associations, so as to mobilize the necessary efforts to put an end to that scourge. To that end, there must be sufficient technical support and financing from donors.

Sexual violence against women and children in conflict is a crime against the dignity, innocence and humanity of those vulnerable groups. We should not remain silent or condone such crimes or diminish their serious consequences.

Furthermore, sexual violence in conflict threatens social stability and hampers national reconciliation and the unity of a society in the post-conflict stage. We have a long way to go, but that should not dissuade the international community from tackling this scourge on all levels and with all the means available.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I want to thank you, Madam President, for organizing this important open debate on the issue of sexual violence in conflict, an issue to which my delegation attaches great importance and which, unfortunately, remains very topical. I thank the Secretary-General for the presentation of his second annual report on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149). I also thank Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura for her very committed statement and the remarkable work she has carried out as Special Representative of the Secretary-General, with the support of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. Finally, I would like to thank Ms. Saran Keïta Diakité of Mali, who delivered a strong message on behalf of non-governmental organizations on the need to combat sexual violence, in particular in crisis areas in Africa.

With resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010), we have given ourselves the means to act in the fight against the scourge of sexual violence in conflict. Today's open debate is an opportunity to take stock of the implementation of those resolutions and the challenges that lie ahead.

I fully align myself with the statement soon to be delivered on behalf of the European Union.

The evidence is clear: sexual violence in conflict spares no one. It affects adults and children, men as well as women, as evidenced by the increasingly frequent acts of sexual violence against men and boys as a tactic of war or in the context of incarceration or interrogation. The violence documented in Syria, Mali and the Democratic Republic of Congo is the sad illustration of those facts.

The situations of sexual violence in conflict are varied and widespread. That is why it is important for the Security Council to choose, from the arsenal at its disposal, the tools most suited to the different situations.

The Council's actions set an example, and its responsibility in this area is essential. That is clear in the explicit references to the agenda on women and peace and security in the agreed conclusions recently adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women, whose main theme, as I recall, was the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women.

Less than a week ago, I am pleased to say, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of Eight in London adopted a declaration on preventing sexual violence in conflict, which explicitly seeks to carry forward resolution 1325 (2000) and its successors, and contributes to the normative framework of resolutions on children and armed conflict. That declaration rightly recalls once again that the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and children are at the foundation of our fight against sexual violence in conflict.

The Council must be fully informed before acting, which is why it is so important to establish follow-up, analysis and information-exchange mechanisms within peacekeeping operations and political missions and to provide for the deployment of sufficient numbers of women protection advisers, who have a crucial role to play in the coordination of the implementation of Security Council resolutions on conflict-related sexual violence. Luxemburg will remain committed to ensuring that future mandates, as well as the renewal of existing mandates, take into consideration this important aspect. As the Secretary-General underscored this morning, it is important to constantly incorporate that aspect into mission planning and budgeting.

Once the perpetrators of sexual violence have been identified, the Council can and must, through the adoption of targeted measures, step up pressure on those responsible so that they are brought to justice before a competent court and judged. The Council should be able to draw on such an instrument systematically, in our view, following the practices established by the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the inclusion on Sanctions Committee lists of those suspected of acts of sexual violence. Information provided by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General would be highly useful in that regard.

It is under national jurisdictions that perpetrators should primarily be tried, and we must therefore support national Governments in their fight against impunity. Based on the principle of complementarity, international criminal justice still has an important role to play, and we very much welcome the efforts undertaken in that regard by the International Criminal Court.

In that context, it is noteworthy that a second arrest warrant has been issued against General Bosco Ntaganda, incorporating the major accusations of crimes against humanity, rape and sexual slavery. Today, Bosco Ntaganda is in The Hague to be judged for his crimes. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Member States that contributed to his transfer to the Court.

Every victory against impunity is a victory against sexual violence, for only the certainty that a crime will not go unpunished is a real deterrent. The fight against impunity is also the first step in reinstating the rights of victims. It is not the only step: it is also necessary to take measures such as granting compensation to repair, as far as possible, the consequences of the damage caused.

We know the extent to which crisis resolution and post-conflict situations are volatile and precarious.

That is why it is important once again to ensure the involvement of women in peace processes so that peace and ceasefire agreements fully and systematically take into account the issue of sexual violence.

The fight against sexual violence must also be integrated into all security sector and justice reform processes worthy of the name. In that regard, Luxemburg has supported a number of workshops, including in South Sudan and Liberia, aimed at strengthening the contribution of United Nations peacekeeping operations to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). In particular, they sought to ensure that women were better represented at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.

Conflict-related sexual violence is not inevitable. But to bring it to an end, we must take into account the magnitude of this scourge. The alarming report before us today makes it cleat that sexual violence in conflict, although it varies with context, is systematic and universally widespread. It is up to us all to take on our responsibility to bring it to an end.

In conclusion, we hope that today's debate, the Special Representative's briefings to the Council on specific situations, such as that on Syria tomorrow, as well as the discussions the Council will hold over the coming months on this topic will enable real results to be achieved. In terms of follow-up, it would be particularly worthwhile to establish, as proposed by the Secretary-General, a system that would better enable us to monitor the fulfilment of commitments undertaken to fight sexual violence by the parties to a conflict in implementation of resolution 1960 (2010).

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): We very much welcome and, indeed, need this open debate on sexual violence on conflict.

I express my thanks to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/149) and his personal leadership, and to Special Representative Bangura for her forthright commitment and achievements, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for its impressive work and to Ms. Saran Keïta Diakité for her own exemplary efforts.

In so much of the Council's work, including in Mali, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Syria, we have heard repeatedly over the past few weeks about the widespread use of sexual violence in conflict. It is a brutal, unacceptable but pervasive dimension of conflict today. We must constantly think about how we can prevent it from occurring, and, when it does, we must ensure that survivors are supported and perpetrators held relentlessly to account.

The Secretary-General's report is stark. It highlights too much of concern: sexual slavery, forced marriage by armed groups, increasing abuse of boys and men, the plight of children born of rape, the nexus between sexual violence and the illicit extraction of natural resources, and, as we have seen in Syria, the threat and use of sexual violence to forcibly displace entire communities. That must catalyze even stronger action by us.

Ending impunity is critical to driving change. As a deterrent, it is a critical part of a prevention strategy. We must make the best use of the tools at the Council's disposal to target perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict, whether individuals, armed groups or States, and whether they commit, command or condone violations. Under many Sanctions Committees, persistent perpetrators fit within existing listing criteria, and we support the more rigorous application of those. We also support the inclusion of such criteria where the situation demands it.

At the national and international levels, criminal justice mechanisms must develop dedicated sexual violence expertise to ensure that crimes are effectively prosecuted, survivors get the support they need, and perpetrators are convicted. In that context, we would like to single out and welcome the United Kingdom's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative, its efforts through the Group of Eight and the exemplary focus and resourcing that the United Kingdom itself has brought to the investigation and prosecution of sexual violence.

We also agree with the Secretary-General's recommendation that sexual violence should be included in the definition of acts prohibited under ceasefires agreements, and support the introduction of a systematic procedure to monitor parties' compliance with their commitments.

Security sector reform, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, are essential to rebuilding communities. Measures against sexual violence must be integral to them. Too often, perpetrators of sexual violence are themselves allowed to assume positions of power in post-conflict settings. We must strengthen efforts to ensure appropriate levels of preventive vetting.

We strongly support the systematic deployment of gender expertise in all Council-mandated missions, including women protection advisers, whose deployment must be prioritised in mission planning processes. We also support the deployment of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Supporting women's leadership and participation is essential to addressing, responding to, and indeed ending sexual violence. Women are powerful agents of change, and we must harness that capacity by promoting their far greater participation in conflict resolution and post-conflict transitions.

Ms. Keïta Diakité reminded us this morning of the nexus between arms and conflict-related sexual violence. In that connection we welcome the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty, including the requirement that States parties consider, in making their export assessments, the risks of arms being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence. We must now focus on the Treaty's entry into force and its effective implementation.

It is essential that survivors' needs be addressed, including through access to multisectoral services. Often, the vast majority of survivors are children, and services must be very specifically tailored to their needs. We must take specific steps to also address the risks faced by women's human rights defenders operating on the front lines, so as to ensure that they are able to carry out their work and do not themselves become victims of sexual violence.

Action to address sexual violence in conflict cannot occur without adequate and predictable resourcing. Priority should be given to ensuring that key actors, including national institutions, United Nations agencies and civil society groups, have the resources and capacity needed to tackle such issues, ranging from prevention and service provision for survivors to longer-term measures to end impunity. My own Government announced last year an additional $320 million for activities in our own immediate region to focus on those kinds of needs.

In conclusion, sexual violence touches upon the full breadth of the Council's work. While success is very obviously difficult to achieve, it requires of us vigilant and consistent commitment if we are ever to end this devastating, immoral and criminal practice.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I thank you, Madam President, for holding this debate today and for coming to New York to give added impetus to this important issue. The huge number of those wanting to speak in this debate is a visible demonstration of its importance and topicality. I join others in thanking the Secretary-General and his Special Representative Zainab Hawa Bangura for their valuable briefings today. I also thank Ms. Keïta Diakité for her moving words on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

The United Kingdom is deeply committed to addressing sexual violence in conflict, which is one of the most persistent and neglected injustices in the world today. Last week, the Group of Eight (G-8) Foreign Ministers, under the presidency of the United Kingdom, agreed a historic declaration on preventing sexual violence in conflict. They pledged to work together and with others in a concerted and comprehensive campaign to address that crime. The G-8 declared for the first time that rape and serious sexual violence in conflict were grave breaches of the Geneva Convention, as well as being war crimes. That decision recognizes our responsibility to actively search for, prosecute or hand over for trial anyone accused of those crimes, regardless of nationality, wherever they are in the world.

Today's debate is an opportunity to reinforce that message and to send a strong, shared message that there is no safe haven for perpetrators of rape and sexual violence. The statements we have heard thus far in this debate are very encouraging on that point.

The United Kingdom welcomes the Secretary-General's timely report (S/2013/149). A key objective of the United Kingdom's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative is to strengthen United Nations and other international efforts to eradicate that scourge.

We wholeheartedly support the work and mandate of Ms. Bangura, especially her efforts to build coherence and coordination in the United Nations response and her focus on national ownership and responsibility. The report provides an important opportunity to assess progress and to consider what more needs to be done. It is clear that there is a huge amount still to be done.

I would like to highlight the following three critical areas that we must address.

First, the United Kingdom would like to commend the Secretary-General for recommending that all country resolutions and mandate renewals for United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions systematically address sexual violence and include the specific language of resolution 1960 (2010). We agree that peacekeeping mandates should include language on the cessation of sexual violence, on dialogue with parties to conflict to seek protection commitments and on the deployment of women protection advisors, and that we should ensure, in particular, that they are funded from peacekeeping mission budgets. We must be rigorous and consistent in our approach on this issue.

Secondly, we recognize that a focus on the difficult issues surrounding security sector and justice reform is critical: providing training for national security forces; ensuring the principles of no amnesty for perpetrators of grave human rights violations, including sexual violence; and ensuring that the security sector is accessible and responsive to all. In the justice sector, work to train the police, magistrates and judges and more training for female lawyers will result in more effective investigations and prosecutions. That is also very welcome.

Thirdly, we welcome calls to ensure that the Security Council, mediators, envoys and Member States actively engage in dialogue with parties to conflict on conflict-related sexual violence. That is central to ensuring that the issue of sexual violence as a method or tactic of conflict is explicitly recognized in subsequent peace processes and ceasefire agreements. As my Foreign Secretary said on 11 April, we need such commitments to end the treatment of rape and sexual violence as a secondary issue and to put women and women's rights front and centre in conflict resolution.

Finally, as the representatives of China and Luxembourg, among others, have highlighted, let us not forget that women's full and equal participation is fundamental to combating sexual violence. Women must not be seen merely as passive victims, but as active participants who are central to all efforts to combat that horrific phenomenon.

Let me end as I began, by thanking you, Madam, for holding this debate and reinforcing the Council's continued commitment to tackling this issue. As you know, my Foreign Secretary is personally committed to this issue. Together, we absolutely must deliver on our promises to those devastated by those appalling and life-shattering crimes, wherever they take place. A strong resolution that demonstrates this shared commitment is both timely and critical, and we intend to use a further debate in June, during our presidency of the Council, to keep attention focused on the need to end these crimes.

Mr. Mehdiyev (Azerbaijan): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate on women and peace and security. I also thank the Secretary-General, his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for their statements and presentations. We take note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149) on sexual violence in conflict and of the recommendations contained therein.

Azerbaijan welcomes the increasing attention being paid by the Security Council and the wider international community to this topic, which has contributed to developing a solid normative framework and to raising awareness on the impact that sexual violence has on victims, families and societies. The appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the establishment of a system-wide entity on women's equality and empowerment — UN-Women — has added a new dimension to the global efforts.

It is imperative that all parties to armed conflict strictly abide by their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. Azerbaijan reiterates its strong condemnation of all acts of sexual violence in conflict. There can be no tolerance for such acts, and all the necessary measures must be taken to bring perpetrators to justice and put an end to impunity.

As the Secretary-General noted in his report, national courts remain the principal venue for holding individuals accountable for crimes of sexual violence. At the same time, the lack of adequate national capacity and expertise to investigate and prosecute acts of sexual violence remains one of the main impediments to ensuring accountability.

We note, in that regard, the efforts of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, which was established pursuant to resolution 1888 (2009), aimed at strengthening the capacity of national rule-of-law and justice actors.

The Secretary-General also noted in his report that

> "The focus of international criminal justice and mixed tribunals on combating acts of sexual violence, including rape, in the context of crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide, represents an important complement to national efforts." (*S/2013/149, para. 112*)

Indeed, where national authorities fail to take action, the international community should play a more proactive role in ensuring an appropriate response.

Unfortunately, not all grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including acts of sexual violence, have received due attention and response at the international and regional levels. Measures that are more resolute and targeted are required to end impunity in such situations. Commitments to protection efforts must be free of selectivity and politically motivated approaches and preferences. In that regard, Azerbaijan notes the role played by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict pursuant to her mandate.

The establishment of rules with respect to gross violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including sexual violence in conflict, and the provision of adequate and effective reparations are measures that aim, inter alia, to repair or reduce the immediate and long-term harm experienced by victims of such violations. It is therefore important to ensure that reparations are established through judicial or administrative mechanisms and made available to victims.

Furthermore, past wrongs left unpunished or unrecognized often impede progress in achieving long-awaited peace and reconciliation and can even play a key role in the eruption of new conflicts and the commission of new crimes.

It is therefore important that the Security Council, Member States and regional organizations ensure that mediators and envoys in mediation, peace and preventive diplomacy processes can contribute to ensuring accountability, including by encouraging the parties concerned to envisage transitional justice and reparation clauses in peace agreements.

We also support the call of the Secretary-General for the use of United Nations mediation guidance in addressing conflict-related sexual violence in ceasefire and peace agreements.

It is also essential to employ all other available means to address sexual violence in conflict, including mandating international commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions and supporting the implementation of their recommendations. We concur with the Secretary-General that those responsible for sexual violence and other human rights violations must be excluded from all branches of Government and that the principle of no amnesty for perpetrators of such offenses must be applied and implemented.

It is important that the Security Council consistently maintain its focus on protection efforts, including sexual violence in conflict. Azerbaijan will support more systematic and frequent discussion on the topic.

In conclusion I would like once again to commend Rwanda for convening this open debate.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Rwanda.

It is a great honour for me to be here today and to preside over this important open debate on women and peace and security, and sexual violence in conflict. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict for joining us today.

I also welcome the presence of the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, the First Lady and Ministerial Secretary for Social Inclusion of El Salvador, as well as Ms. Saran Keïta Diakité, representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

Rwanda commends the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict for bringing renewed focus to the fight for the protection of women.

We welcome the Secretary-General's recent report on sexual violence (S/2013/149), as well as the efforts undertaken by the Special Representative, notably during her visits to the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia, to engage leaders and other stakeholders on that most important subject.

We hope that the Secretary-General's report will enhance the coordination and effectiveness of the global response to the problem of sexual violence. Besides addressing specific challenges facing women and girls in conflict zones, such an approach must incorporate broader peace and security imperatives. Critically, we envisage that it will lead to more effective monitoring of the commitments made by Member States to prevent sexual violence, where possible, and to address its consequences, where necessary.

In conflict settings and, more specifically, those driven by genocide ideology, as my country experienced in 1994, rape and sexual assault are used to punish, humiliate and dehumanize victims, their families and communities. Far from being random acts of brutality, the systematic sexual victimization of women and girls in conflict settings is now well understood as a crime against humanity that demands the urgent attention of the world.

Let me touch on the experience of my country with the intent to offer hope to women victimized by conflict. My country's strong stand on violence against women emanates from the high value it places on women and girls, as well as our national resolution to never again see the cruelty directed to Rwandan women during the 1994 genocide. On a national level and beyond our borders, we take this issue extremely seriously.

Just 19 years ago, Rwandan women were forced to endure inhuman and degrading atrocities. Many were raped and left for dead. Among those who survived, many were infected with incurable diseases; some were made pregnant; many suffered the humiliation of having been abused in front of their families. And yet, the women of Rwanda refused to be defined or defeated by their ordeals. They raised their heads, declining to become permanent victims or objects of pity. They sought justice. They demanded dignity. Inasmuch as Rwanda has been able to reconcile and recover from the events of 1994, it is because of that unshakeable spirit of defiance, found foremost among its women and girls.

The use of sexual violence in that fashion was exported from Rwanda to the Democratic Republic of the Congo when genocidal forces escaped into the eastern part of that country, after July 1994. Tragically, that behaviour has been adopted by a plethora of armed groups that operate in the region. As a result, the incidence of such crimes has grown rapidly in recent years. But we must not accept such atrocities as a fact of life. The international community must redouble its efforts to combat the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, along with those who fund and support them, wherever they are.

It is a broken society that fails to protect its most vulnerable citizens from sexual violence. The proliferation of such violence is a sure sign of State failure. As such, any society hoping to move beyond crisis and conflict cannot hope to do so until it has corrected its course with respect to the treatment and prevention of sexual violence. Indeed, Rwanda's experience leads us to believe that healing and reconciliation are possible only when women claim their rightful place at the heart of our communities. The Government of Rwanda therefore welcomes this opportunity to express our unequivocal condemnation of all forms of violence against women and girls, particularly in conflict situations.

Impunity breeds and rewards criminality and violence. Only by insisting on justice and by fighting impunity has Rwanda been able to achieve meaningful reconciliation within our borders. The eradication of sexual violence in conflict will not be possible as long as perpetrators are able to escape accountability for their actions. We have come to understand first-hand the importance of strengthening internal justice mechanisms and of building institutions that enhance the accessibility of justice. Rwanda therefore calls upon all Member States to enforce accountability, as well as to desist from harbouring the perpetrators of humanitarian and human rights violations, which shields them from the consequences of their crimes.

Rwanda has adopted a range of policies to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, and I will touch on only some of those in a moment. First, however, it is important to stress that, as we recoiled from the horrors visited upon our women, the Government and people of Rwanda have worked assiduously to instil a culture of respect within the military and the police force, among boys and girls in the classroom and within families and communities. That has prompted a profound shift in attitude among Rwandans of all ages and walks of life.

Specific policy responses to the problem of sexual violence include the establishment of one-stop centres, which offer a wide range of services for the victims of gender-based violence. Those centres bring together the relevant Government agencies, as well as community leaders and civil society, to provide integrated support for victims. That approach of offering comprehensive medical, psychosocial, evidence-gathering and judicial services in one place has been met with such success in the past three years since it began that my Government has committed to a significant expansion of the programme over the next seven years.

In response to the Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women and Girls campaign, initiated in 2010, Rwanda hosted an international conference on the role of security organs in ending violence against women and girls. The conference endorsed a declaration and subsequently formed a secretariat to monitor its implementation. With a current membership of 16 countries and a permanent secretariat, based in Kigali, members have developed a standardized training manual to implement an all-Africa command post exercise, code-named Africa UNiTE.

In addition, Rwanda is the leading contributor from Africa of female police and correctional officers to United Nations peace support and peacekeeping missions. Among other duties, those officers actively contribute to combating and raising awareness about violence against women. They also serve as advisers on gender-based violence and share best practices with officers and local authorities. All our peacekeepers undergo specific training on respect for gender and human rights prior to deployment.

Time does not permit me to outline all the initiatives undertaken by my Government, but I note that Rwanda adopted a national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000) in 2010 and is a party to the Kampala Declaration of the First Ladies on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence of the 2011 International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

As expressed during the discussion on the prevention of conflict in Africa earlier this week (see S/PV.6946), Rwanda takes the firm view that lasting peace and security, and therefore the safety of women and girls, are possible only when nations, supported by regional and international bodies, address the root causes of conflict. The degradation of women and girls as part of conflict is unacceptable in any form under any circumstances. Its eradication must be a first-order priority of the Council.

Rwanda urges all parties to armed conflict to enforce a clear prohibition on sexual violence, expressed through chains of command, via codes of conduct and military field manuals and in constant training. We further call upon those parties to ensure that alleged abuses are investigated swiftly and perpetrators held accountable.

Rwanda reminds civilian and military leaders with command responsibilities that they, too, are accountable for acts of sexual violence committed on their watch. Rwanda will, on a case-by-case basis, support the adoption or extension of targeted sanctions against persistent perpetrators of rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Rwanda supports calls to include provisions in all peacekeeping mandates that specifically address the prevention of and response to sexual violence. That should include, where appropriate, the identification of women's protection advisers, as the Secretary-General urged earlier in his statement, alongside gender advisers and human rights protection units.

Rwanda recommends that the problem of sexual violence be addressed directly as part of any post-conflict or peacebuilding process. That should include United Nations-sponsored peace negotiations and security sector reform processes or be part of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Whether through legislative reforms, awareness-raising campaigns and the training of police, prosecutors, judges and magistrates or the recruitment of more women to such positions, we must insist that national authorities take proactive steps to protect women and girls. Due consideration should also be given to the prosecution of sexual violence through transitional justice arrangements. In Rwanda, the destigmatization of sexual violence, which empowered victims and gave them a voice, was a central element of the post-genocide justice.

I cannot end without calling upon the international community, non-governmental organizations, civil society, faith-based organizations and other non-State actors operating in affected areas to support the genuine reporting and investigation of sexual crimes. That is important to ensure that justice is served and that survivors are able to begin the process of healing. Above all, we call upon all parties to conflict that are responsible for acts of sexual violence to cease such violations.

It is time, in our view, for the world to move beyond expressions of outrage and, instead, to make concrete and measurable progress towards a world where the bodies of women are no longer considered a battlefield.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. I wish to inform all concerned that we will continue the debate through the lunch hour, as we have a very large number of speakers.

I now give the floor to the representataive of Norway.

Mr. Eide (Norway): I have the honour to address the Council on behalf of the Nordic countries, namely, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and Norway.

Security threats against women are often dismissed as belonging to the private sphere or are written off as cultural issues. But let us be clear, conflict-related sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, and, in the most extreme cases, an act of genocide. We must respond with the same sense of urgency as we do to other threats against peace and security. We must recognize the need for the participation of both women and men in preventing and solving conflict and, not least, in building sustainable peace.

The report before us (S/2013/149) is a catalogue of violence, rape, atrocities and torture. The Nordic countries welcome the comprehensive approach it takes, covering both protracted crises and emerging concerns. Its attention to sexual violence against men and boys, the practice of forced marriage and the plight of children born as a result of wartime rape is valid and timely. The Nordic countries commend the work of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, and particularly welcome her efforts to foster national leadership, build capacity and hold Governments accountable. During conflict it is national Governments that have the main responsibility to protect civilians, whether from more conventional methods of warfare or from conflict-related sexual violence. All too often they fail to do so.

One glaring example is Syria, where the Government continues to demonstrate its utter failure to protect its own citizens. The use of sexual violence and rape by warring parties in Syria has been reported by the independent international commission of inquiry, as well as by numerous human rights organizations. As thousands of civilians flee from war-torn Syria every day, the world is watching in horror as history repeats itself.

As long as the permanent members of the Security Council remain divided, gross human rights violations are allowed to continue with impunity. In his report, the Secretary-General makes a number of important recommendations to the Security Council on combating impunity. In that connection, the Nordic countries urge Council members, first, to include the women and peace and security agenda in all the relevant Council resolutions and mandates and to put the issue on the agenda of visits to missions.

Secondly, we must ensure that the resolutions on women and peace and security are not only part of Security Council's debates but also have real impact on the ground and that commitments are followed up.

Thirdly, we call on the Security Council to continue to combat impunity for crimes of sexual violence and to use its unique power to increase the pressure through targeted sanctions against perpetrators of sexual violence.

The Nordic countries warmly welcome the Secretary-General's call for emergency contraception and safe abortion to be included in the responses and services to survivors. The agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women also call for the provision of such life-saving services. Girls and women who have been raped during war should not be forced to continue unwanted pregnancies. For some victims of rape, undergoing a dangerous abortion is the only alternative to a life of shame, isolation and hardship, or even honour killings.

The rehabilitation of victims will not be possible unless they have access to comprehensive services. That includes access to health, justice and reparations. As long as survivors have little or nothing to gain from reporting sexual violence and coming forward, under-reporting will continue and impunity will prevail. Sexual violence, including threats of sexual violence, can have far-reaching effects, not only for those affected and their families but also for the wider communities and future prospects for peace and reconciliation.

Sustainable peace cannot be achieved without inclusive processes in which women's agency and contributions are fully recognized. We strongly commend the tireless work of civil society organizations in continuing to advance women's participation and bringing their voices from the ground to the fore of international peace and security. Promoting and supporting the broad women and peace and security agenda is a priority for the Nordic Governments. It is part of our joint efforts to foster gender equality and international peace and security. We are convinced that the two are closely linked.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of El Salvador.

Ms. Vanda Pignato (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to thank you, Sir, for giving me this opportunity to tell the Council, very briefly, about the situation in El Salvador with regard to sexual violence and gender-based violence in general, 21 years after the signing of the peace agreements that brought our past armed conflict to an end.

As is well known and has been repeated here on many occasions, post-conflict societies also face significant challenges in combating and eliminating sexual violence. That is an extensive phenomenon; it is deeply rooted in our societies and predates the conditions that have led to armed conflict.

After the end of the civil war, El Salvador lived through two decades in which gender policies and attention to human rights violations were not high on the Government's agenda. To be honest, little, if anything, was done to ensure access to justice by victims and to fight impunity, and even less to establish measures that would lead to reparations for victims.

We all know very well that, after the chaos of armed conflict, the fundamental institutions of a country are left in a general state of weakness and dependency, with limited and low levels of economic and human resources. Such countries usually take a long time to achieve the strengthening of their institutions to a degree that would allow them to be functional at an acceptable level. That is the situation in which El Salvador finds itself only four years after political change came about. At that time, a new democratic force came to power that was committed to defending human rights and promoting policies of social inclusion. Among those policies are gender equality and fighting sexual violence.

In fact, the Government of President Mauricio Funes Cartagena is fighting against those conservative sectors that in the past were responsible for establishing virtually feudal systems of power between the politically and economically wealthy, on the one hand, and the majority of the impoverished population, deprived of their rights and guarantees, on the other.

In recent years, with the invaluable help of the international community and multilateral orgaaizations, El Salvador has witnessed visible changes. For the first time in our history, a policy defending and guaranteeing human rights and social rights was established and we began to wage a battle to eradicate violence in all its forms. In the area of public safety, El Salvador is now experiencing an unprecedented era in which crime has drastically dropped, especially the number of murders. In just one year, statistical data shows, violent deaths have dropped by 52 per cent — whereas we used to have a rate of 70 deaths per 100,000, it is now 30 per 100,000. Cases of femicide have also dropped, with a clear downward trend, and last year the rate of femicide was down by 50 per cent.

Parallel to those efforts, the Salvadoran Government has strongly promoted a campaign against gender-based violence and sexual violence in general on different fronts. We have strengthened legislation with the approval of the comprehensive special act on violence-free lives for women. The entry into force of that new piece of legislation has been fundamental in enabling the State to exercise its responsibilities in defending, protecting and guaranteeing the rights of women.

In 2011, the programme entitled Ciudad Mujer was launched, an unprecedented experiment in Latin America of gender-equality policies. It makes invisible people visible in public policy. It provides comprehensive care to women, particularly from poorer backgrounds. It gives them support in gender violence — particularly sexual violence — training, entrepreneurship education and training to enter the work force, as well as in sexual and reproductive health.

Ciudad Mujer started in March 2011 with the opening of its first centre. There are now another three centres. More than 140,000 women have participated in the programme, with more than 260,000 services having been provided to date. That policy has been recognized by eminent persons throughout the world as being an outstanding gender equality policy.

Finally, the President, through the secretariat for social inclusion and the Salvadoran Institute for Women's Development, is currently promoting a large-scale awareness-raising campaign to combat violence against women, which is having a huge social impact. For the first time in El Salvador, we now have a clear policy to combat sexual- and gender-based violence, with particular concern for the principles enshrined by the United Nations on this matter. We now need the ongoing support of the international community.

We particularly need the assistance of the United Nations, given the paramount role it played as mediator in our 1992 peace agreements, so that the accomplishments of the past few years do not lose momentum and so that there is no possibility of a return to the past in those areas.

The Government of El Salvador is thus strongly committed to combating impunity and to providing access to redress for victims, as can be seen on a daily basis in the Ciudad Mujer programme. For that reason, it is important that the international community follow that process in El Salvador and that political support and cooperation be provided, so that, in the short term, the positive results of the current compensation policies can be seen on a large scale.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ioannis Vrailas, Deputy Head of Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Vrailas: On behalf of the European Union and its member States, the acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, align themselves with this statement.

I thank the delegation of Rwanda for organizing and hosting this important debate today, as well as the Secretary-General, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zainab Hawa Bangura, and the representative of the NGO Working Group for their statements.

The latest report of the Secretary-General to the Council (S/2013/149) reaffirms the pervasiveness of sexual violence and its interconnection with various aspects of the maintenance of peace and security. We note, in that regard, the attention drawn to the nexus between sexual violence and the illicit extraction of natural resources, the forcible displacement of civilian populations and the inadequacy of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform efforts.

The recently adopted United Nations Arms Trade Treaty states that the risk of conventional arms being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence needs to be taken into account by its State parties. That reaffirms that sexual violence needs, from the start, to be considered as part of all actions to ensure international peace and security in order for them to be effective.

Sexual violence has, in addition to its devastating impact on survivors, a broad and long-lasting effect on communities and on States as a whole for generations, not least through the plight of the children born as a result of rape. Sexual violence continues to be perpetrated as a tactic of war, including against men and boys and in the context of detention and interrogation, on which further information is needed.

Sexual violence in conflict remains prevalent, yet universally under-reported. That is, inter alia, the result of threats faced by those who come forward to report such crimes. We underline the need to take all measures necessary to protect survivors, witnesses, humanitarian workers, medical personnel, human rights defenders and journalists who contribute to aiding survivors and collect information on sexual violence. The European Union's guidelines on human rights defenders devote particular attention to vulnerable human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders and those working on conflict issues.

We welcome the call of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, in its most recent conclusions from its March session, to ensure that, in armed conflict and post-conflict situations, the prevention of and response to all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence, are effectively addressed, including through the investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators, so as to end impunity, lift barriers to women's access to justice, establish complaint and reporting mechanisms and provide support to victims and survivors and affordable and accessible health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health as well as reintegration measures. We support the availability of reparations as a form of transitional gender justice. We underline the need for national ownership, leadership and responsibility in addressing sexual violence.

The prosecution of crimes of sexual violence is an important deterrent to future crimes. Ensuring accountability and punishing the perpetrators of the most serious crimes against women and girls under national and international law, as well as holding alleged perpetrators of those crimes accountable under national or international justice, remain essential. We note the significant advancement in international law made by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which includes sexual violence in the definition of crimes within its mandate, in particular as a crime against humanity. The ICC continues to be an important mechanism in combating sexual violence in conflict.

We support the continued application of targeted and graduated measures by the relevant Security Council Sanctions Committees aimed at perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict, as well as other measures at the Council's disposal including referrals to the ICC, mandating commissions of inquiry and further steps towards ensuring systematic monitoring of commitments by parties to conflict under its resolution 1960 (2010).

We welcome the report (S/2012/732) of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Council's resolutions on women and peace and security and the recommendations contained therein. We note positively the further establishment of the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence. We also welcome the continued and systematic deployment of women's protection advisers. The European Union supports the swift deployment of human rights observers in Mali by the African Union and the United Nations and provides financial support for the deployment of independent human rights observers. The European Union training mission in Mali will include training on gender and human rights.

We strongly condemn the systematic and widespread use of sexual violence, referred to in the report, which is used to punish, intimidate and subjugate women and girls in Mali, as well as the use of rape as a tactic of war in rebel-controlled zones. The report also refers to two distinct trends regarding sexual violence identified by the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic in its reports: the occurrence of sexual violence during house searches and at checkpoints and the perpetration of rape and torture in the context of detention. We also note the two major patterns of sexual violence detected by the Secretary-General in the Democratic Republic of Congo — systematic targeting by armed groups of civilians so as to control areas rich in natural resources, and retaliation against communities, often on the basis of the real or perceived ethnicity of the survivors, for supposed political and economic gain.

The European Union continues to implement its dedicated policy on women, peace and security adopted in 2008. The European Union support to various initiatives related to women, peace and security amounts to approximately €200 million a year. The European Union is envisaging increased funding for prevention and response efforts, such as programming to combat gender-based violence, including sexual violence, from the first phase of conflict and in humanitarian emergencies.

The European Union now has gender advisors and/or human rights focal points in each of its crisis management missions and operations throughout the world. We continue our work on specific training modules on human rights and gender in crisis management, while ensuring a focus on sexual violence in armed conflicts. We continue to work closely with UN-Women and support initiatives to ensure greater participation by women in peacebuilding and post-conflict planning.

The European Union and its member States highly appreciate the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, including its coordination with other international entities such as Justice Rapid Response and the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, as well as the recent commitments of the Group of Eight to do more to address impunity for sexual violence in conflict, including the endorsement of the development of an international protocol on the investigation and documentation of sexual violence in conflict. We continue to support its efforts, as well as those of the United Nations system, Member States and all actors involved in preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Mr. Marn (Slovenia): It is my great honour to address the Security Council today on behalf of the Human Security Network, a cross-regional network that consists of Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Panama, Switzerland, Thailand, the Republic of South Africa as an observer, and my own country, Slovenia. Let me thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, and Ms. Saran Keïta Diakité of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for their comprehensive statements. On behalf of the members of the Network, I should also like to express our great appreciation to the presidency of Rwanda for convening this very important open debate. The Human Security Network has traditionally been engaged in these debates, since women's full enjoyment of all human rights has been at the core of our group's agenda from its inception.

I should like to commend the regular interaction among the Security Council, UN-Women and the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We deem that interaction to be of paramount importance. We also strongly encourage more direct information sharing between the Special Representative and the relevant Sanctions Committees and associated expert groups, similar to the practice that has been developed on children and armed conflict.

Our group remains greatly concerned about certain facts provided in the Secretary-General's report on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149) that indicate systematic and widespread sexual violence used to punish, intimidate and subjugate women, men and children. In addition, the report highlights the increased use of sexual violence as a means of displacing populations, which represents a worrying trend.

The report also refers to two highly problematic trends that were noticed by the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, namely, the occurrence of sexual violence during house searches and at checkpoints and the perpetration of rape and torture in the context of detention. We call on all parties to cease such violations and any other sexual-violence-related violations and, in accordance with resolution 1960 (2010), to make specific and time-bound protection commitments in that regard. We also call upon the members of the Security Council to consider using all the other means at its disposal to address sexual violence in conflict, including making referrals to the International Criminal Court and other relevant actions.

All the necessary steps, including targeted measures, must be taken to protect individuals, hold perpetrators accountable and provide remedy for victims. It is essential that amnesty provisions not be applicable to crimes of sexual violence in the context of conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. Ending impunity for perpetrators and those responsible in chains of command is also imperative, including personnel within the United Nations. At the same time, the Network believes that we have to place equal importance on addressing the root causes and the enablers of sexual violence in conflict, as well as on strengthening grass-roots women's organizations and additional networks that can provide assistance to victims of sexual violence in conflict. Only when those victims are treated with dignity and respect and given the necessary tools, treatment and care to enable them to protect themselves can they become real agents of change.

In that regard, the Network believes that applying a more people- or victim-centred lens to the issue would help. Moreover, we support the availability of reparations as a form of transitional gender justice. Reparations can deliver redress and acknowledgement of crimes suffered, and can contribute to the fight against impunity and to post-conflict reconstruction and the reintegration of survivors of sexual violence.

The Human Security Network notes the report's recommendation regarding the adoption of sanctions and other targeted measures against individuals and entities by the relevant Sanctions Committees. In that regard, the exchange of information among United Nations peacekeeping missions, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Security Council's Sanctions Committees will be of great importance.

Let me briefly touch upon the already mentioned United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse for United Nations personnel. The Network takes note of the failure to include such a policy in the relevant resolutions, and therefore calls upon all the relevant actors to make more use of references to the zero-tolerance policy.

Noting the Council's creation of several tools with considerable potential for having an impact on the women and peace and security agenda on the ground, we remain concerned over its lack of implementation in some of the already mentioned areas.

In conclusion, even though it is not at the forefront of our discussion today, I should like to reiterate our group's commitment to promoting and enhancing the role of women in peace processes. While it is crucial to today's agenda that we maintain momentum in the fight against sexual violence, we would again like to underline the importance of women's empowerment as part of the solution. We need to see, and enable, women more and more as agents of change. Women's participation at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes cannot be overemphasized. Women's participation in establishing effective prevention and protection strategies can contribute to combating sexual violence in conflict and promoting gender equality. We also remain strong supporters of women protection advisers, who can positively contribute to facilitating and coordinating the implementation of Security Council resolutions on sexual violence in conflict within United Nations peacekeeping and political missions.

We also avail ourselves of this opportunity to highlight the importance of the recent adoption of the agreed conclusions on the prevention of sexual violence at the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which, among other goals, seek to ensure that in armed conflict and post-conflict situations the prevention of and response to all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence, are effectively addressed. We must all strive towards enabling more protection for women and girls in conflict situations and encourage the empowerment of women and their systematic inclusion and meaningful participation at all levels.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Chullikatt (Holy See): My delegation wishes to congratulate the President on Rwanda's presidency of the Security Council this month and on convening the present open debate on sexual violence in conflict. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149). I also take this opportunity to thank Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for her very useful briefing.

Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the international community has followed closely the role of women in the context of war or post-war situations, not only as victims but, more important, as agents and important contributors to the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, while stressing the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution.

My delegation commends those efforts and is convinced that there is ample room for the greater involvement of women, especially in the prevention of war, in the reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction of societies in post-war situations, and in avoiding relapses into armed conflict. Women can and should play greater roles as allies of peace.

In that context, the continued episodes of sexual violence, as the report describes, including, inter alia, rape, forced sterilization, abduction for sexual purposes and sexual slavery, to name just a few of the egregious acts of violence against women, are even more frustrating and saddening. As is recognized, women and girls are those predominantly affected by sexual violence, although men and boys are also victims of such heinous acts. The underlying reasons are varied; in some cases, it is done as a strategy to displace populations in order to gain access to natural resources or to facilitate drug trafficking, while in other cases it becomes a way to vent hatred for a certain race or ethnicity, or as political or economic retaliation. In that regard, it is disappointing that the report fails to highlight the targeted attacks against victims based on their religious beliefs, despite the persistence of such acts in nearly every region of the world. Also, the perpetrators, too, are varied and can be found in both legitimate State actors, such as those in a position of trust — members of armed or security forces, for example, or even United Nations peacekeepers — and in non-State actors.

The violent domination of a human being constitutes an egregious form of degradation of his or her dignity, but also of the aggressor, who, in so doing, disfigures himself or herself as a human person. Such heinous crimes are yet another consequence of the destructive power of war. All States and the international community as a whole must therefore do their utmost to stop those barbarous acts, which have been properly labelled an outrage to the conscience of humankind.

My delegation wishes to focus its remarks on the following three aspects, namely, prevention, criminal responsibility and assistance to victims.

With regard to prevention, it seems not unfitting to recall how one of the first forms of prevention used in connection with crimes of sexual violence was our own intense and timely intervention in crises using various peaceful means for which the international community is well equipped, such as mediation, international measures and a commitment to tackling the underlying social and economic causes of conflicts. Alongside those broader protection efforts there should be specific prevention measures, for example, educating members of armed forces in the areas of discipline and moral fibre and undertaking awareness campaigns to promote values that offer a proper view of women in society.

Secondly, with respect to the notion of criminal responsibility, the report is at pains to address the duty to prosecute those culpable for the commission of crimes of sexual violence. In that regard, my delegation expresses the importance of adopting and implementing action plans and legislation aimed at protecting victims from violence and holding perpetrators accountable. In cases where the Security Council is called upon to intervene, appropriate measures should be taken to reaffirm the outright interdiction of those crimes and the criminal liability of those responsible for their commission. It is imperative that the work of monitoring and prosecuting crimes of sexual violence be characterized by justice and equity and not political interests, which could undermine noble motivations and efforts to combat such crimes.

The third issue — assisting victims — seems to receive less emphasis in the report. Indeed, in order to ensure that reprisals or retribution undertaken in the pursuit of justice do not become an end in themselves, it is necessary to keep the focus on reparation for victims. It is essential that victims be afforded every assistance, whereas, on the contrary, all too frequently victims of sexual assault become ostracized by their communities, especially those who report sexual violence or those who have become pregnant as a result of rape. Particularly disturbing in that context is the revictimization of a woman or girl who has been raped when she is forced to live with her aggressor as a so-called wife.

Obviously, sexual violence leads to devastating physical and psychological consequences, sometimes even fatal ones. Of concern to my delegation in that regard is the euphemistic reference in the report to "access to services that would allow [girls or women] to safely terminate a pregnancy" (*S/2013/149, para. 12*). In that sentence, concealed behind a veil of words, lies the stark reality of the suppression of human life — the death of an innocent unborn child — which only visits further violence upon a woman already in difficulty. Rather, the woman with child should be offered care, support, education, counselling and assistance to meet her material, social and spiritual needs during and after her pregnancy, including, if necessary, the possibility of finding a family to adopt her child.

In the final analysis, peace is more about people than it is about particular structures. People who foster peace first of all in their own hearts give rise in turn to innumerable gestures of peace and advance respect for the right to life and security of all persons, especially women and children.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Sparber (Liechtenstein): We welcome the second report of the Secretary-General entitled "Sexual violence in conflict" (S/2013/149), which updates us on the widespread use of sexual violence as a method of warfare in various situations. Let me also commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, and her office, for their great dedication in operationalizing and implementing important mandates deriving from resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010).

My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Canada, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, in particular with its call for increased accountability for acts of conflict-related sexual violence, which is best done by enhancing support for the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in establishing the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence mandated in resolution 1960 (2010). We also support the Secretary-General's recommendation to put in place an appropriate Security Council mechanism or procedure for systematically monitoring commitments by parties listed in the annex of its report.

There is a clear and obvious link between the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. There is ample evidence that small arms facilitate a vast spectrum of human rights violations, including rape and other forms of sexual violence. Liechtenstein therefore welcomes the fact that the Arms Trade Treaty includes the risk of gender-based violence and violence against women and children as one of the criteria that exporting States need to consider before authorizing an arms export. We are particularly pleased that the risk assessment provided for in the Treaty not only covers small arms and light weapons, but also ammunition, munitions, parts and components.

We agree with the Secretary-General's statement that States are primarily responsible for holding individuals to account for sexual and gender-based violence. However, when national jurisdictions are unwilling or unable to fulfil their responsibilities in that regard, the International Criminal Court (ICC) in particular has a complementary role to play. Bringing to justice the perpetrators of sexual violence is an important step for victims seeking to move on with their lives. We are therefore pleased that the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Ms. Fatou Bensouda, has made the fight against sexual violence a focus of her work. The fact that crimes of sexual violence play a role in nearly every case under investigation and prosecution by the Court speaks both to the startling prevalence of sexual violence in armed conflicts today and to the emphasis placed by the ICC on holding perpetrators of those crimes accountable. The voluntary surrender to the ICC by Bosco Ntanganda, whose name has been associated with sexual and gender-based crimes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for many years, is an important message for victims — in the end, justice will be done.

Delivering justice for victims of sexual violence also includes reparative justice. Liechtenstein is a proud donor to the ICC's Trust Fund for Victims, which adopts a gender perspective in all its activities and conducts programmes specifically aimed at assisting victims of sexual and gender-based violence. Having been ordered to provide reparations for the victims of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, in the light of the sexual violence those victims have suffered, the Trust Fund will now for the first time fulfil the promise of reparative justice contained in the Rome Statute.

My delegation is a long-standing supporter of the consistent mainstreaming of the Council's thematic agenda into its country-specific work. In partnership with Switzerland, we have supported the publication of the 2010 *Women, Peace and Security Handbook* by PeaceWomen, which has just been released in a second edition. To increase its usability, we made the handbook available as a mobile application. The handbook makes the complex women, peace and security agenda accessible by breaking it down into specific topics. In addition, an overview of the Council's most relevant previously agreed language has been included so as to ensure that the Council integrates its own decisions on women, peace and security into its country-specific work. It could thereby serve as a practical tool for the drafters of Council resolutions. We hope that Council members will continue making good use of it.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Rishchynski (Canada) (*spoke in French*): First, let me say a few words on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, an informal network of more than 40 interested States Members of the United Nations that is chaired by Canada.

(*spoke in English*)

The 45 members of the Group of Friends, which represent all five regional groups at the United Nations, reaffirm their support, in the strongest terms, for the work of the Security Council aimed at preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. The Group of Friends welcomes the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149) on this issue and calls on the Security Council and the United Nations system to act systematically and comprehensively to address gaps and challenges to, and accelerate progress in, its work on women, peace and security, and to monitor commitments by parties to conflict to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence. We further urge the Security Council to ensure that its mandated missions consistently evaluate the level of protection and promotion of women's human rights.

The Group of Friends welcomes the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, and strongly supports her efforts aimed at preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence, while underlining women's empowerment and equal participation as prerequisites for tackling the underlying causes of sexual violence in conflict. The Group of Friends also welcomes the adoption by the Commission on the Status of Women during its fifty-seventh session, from 4 to 15 March, of its agreed conclusions entitled "The elimination of violence against women and girls".

As mandated by the Security Council in resolution 1888 (2009), the Group of Friends urges the further and timely deployment of women protection advisers to Security Council-mandated missions. Missions must plan and budget for women's protection advisers in all the relevant situations of concern. The Group of Friends also recognizes that women's human rights defenders face particular risks in conflict situations in the course of their work, as that work can include frontline protection, service provision, monitoring, fact-finding and documenting cases of sexual violence and empowering survivors of sexual violence in conflict to pursue judicial and other remedies. The Group of Friends strongly encourages Member States to take steps to ensure that women's human rights defenders are afforded greater protection to carry out their work without risk.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I wish to thank the Rwandan presidency for convening this open debate on conflict-related sexual violence.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada welcomes the Secretary-General's recent report and thanks the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict for their briefings. Canada supports the Special Representative's activities to ensure the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence and to ensure the health, security and dignity of survivors and their access to justice. Conflict-related sexual violence is of great concern to Canada. Canada places high priority on advancing women's full participation at all levels of society — a condition that is essential for maintaining the health, justice and prosperity of communities. Because of its devastating and enduring effects on the women and girls who are subjected to such crimes, as well as on their families and communities, rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict remain a huge barrier to peace, security and development.

(*spoke in English*)

Following the harrowing accounts of sexual violence in Mali reported by the Secretary-General, Canada urges the Council to ensure that the Mali mission mandate specifically addresses sexual violence. The Council should ensure that preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence is included in all mission mandates. Perpetrators of sexual violence must be held to account. We support the prosecution of those who have perpetrated or who have a command responsibility for such crimes. We call on the Council to adopt a systematic approach to addressing reports of conflict-related sexual violence and to ensure that Sanctions Committees include criteria pertaining to acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence.

We welcome the recent agreement between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations to strengthen efforts to tackle conflict-related sexual violence. We urge its implementation and look forward to seeing improvements on the ground very soon.

(*spoke in French*)

Canada's contribution to the prevention of sexual violence in conflict situations includes $18.5 million over the next five years to support victims, as well as to contribute to investigations and prosecutions of perpetrators in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where rape has been used as a weapon of war. Canada has also supported special training investigators of sexual violence, who can be rapidly deployed to post-conflict areas around the world. On 11 April, Canada's Minister for Foreign Affairs, John Baird, announced an additional contribution of $5 million towards tackling sexual violence against women and girls.

We welcome the Government of Afghanistan's efforts to implement a law on the elimination of violence against women. However, more must be done to increase understanding and awareness of the law and its application and to end practices that imprison victims of sexual violence while allowing perpetrators to go free.

(*spoke in English*)

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate that Canada is committed to working with the international community on preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence in all of its forms, including rape as a weapon of war and early and forced marriage, in order to advance human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, including women and girls. We call on the Security Council to strengthen its response in that regard as well.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Botswana.

Mr. Nkoloi (Botswana): Allow me to join everyone here in congratulating you and your country, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. In the same vein, I would like to extend our gratitude for all the information that we have received during the open thematic debates on these very important topics.

I wish to begin by reaffirming the importance that Botswana attaches to the protection and promotion of the rights of women and children, as well as the need to address all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence in the context of armed conflict.

We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/149), which highlights actions taken and challenges faced by States in conflict and post-conflict situations to protect women and children from sexual violence. My delegation further takes note of the analysis that the report provides, as well as the recommendations contained therein.

Sexual violence in armed conflict represents one of the most serious forms of the violation or abuse of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The prevention of sexual violence in armed conflict is therefore both a matter of upholding universal human rights and of maintaining international peace and security, in keeping with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

In that regard, Botswana welcomes the continued focus by the Council on this thematic area and wishes to emphasize the need for increased and more systemic attention to the agenda women and peace and security in the Council's work. We believe that efforts to address sexual violence in armed conflict should be consistent with and complementary to wider efforts to promote the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and other relevant resolutions on women and peace and security. To that end, my delegation also welcomes the work of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict in building coherence and coordination in the United Nations response to sexual violence in armed conflict. In that regard, Botswana supports the Special Representative's focus on national ownership and responsibility, by engaging with Governments and armed groups to establish their commitment to accountability for sexual violence, so as to create procedures that will allow such commitments to be systematically monitored. I would also like to emphasize that greater coordination and collaboration with other relevant stakeholders is important to improving global efforts to address sexual violence.

The current report highlights several emerging concerns, including sexual violence against men and boys, particularly in the context of detention, as well as the plight of children born out of rape, sexual slavery and forced marriages by armed groups, as has been documented in countries such as Mali, the Central African Republic, Somalia and others. We also take note of the parties named in the report, which includes the following significant additions: the Syrian Government forces and their allied militia, the Shabbiha; the Séléka rebels in the Central African Republic; and several armed groups in Mali. Additions to the existing listings for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, such as the Police nationale congolaise, the Mouvement du 23 Mars and several more Mai-Mai groups in the Kivus, have also been noted.

Despite the international community's repeated condemnation of sexual violence in armed conflict, we remain deeply concerned about the fact that such acts continue to occur and in some situations have even become systematic and widespread. Impunity for sexual violence by armed groups is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated. In that regard, my delegation wishes to stress the urgency and importance of demonstrating commitment and political will through efforts to prevent sexual violence and enforce accountability by prosecuting those responsible for perpetrating crimes against civilians. We therefore call on the Security Council to continue its efforts to fight impunity and uphold accountability. Through its relevant Sanctions Committees, the Council should also consider the possible effectiveness of existing sanctions regimes on parties named in the report.

Botswana strongly supports the involvement of women in peace negotiations, peacebuilding and conflict prevention. We are also supportive of calls for addressing concerns about sexual violence in mediation and peace processes, particularly in the context of security arrangements and transitional justice mechanisms. However, we believe that such efforts should take into consideration the needs and rights of women and children. I also wish to emphasize the importance of enhancing efforts to eliminate obstacles to women's access to justice, as well as of assisting States in conflict and post-conflict situations in their efforts to address sexual violence.

Ending violations of women's human rights is a moral imperative and one we must collectively commit to if we are to achieve it. In that regard, Botswana strongly supports all efforts aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women and children, including sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. In conclusion, we remain optimistic that, given our collective will, especially in the Security Council, we can bring an end to such heinous crimes.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Umemoto (Japan): First of all, Japan welcomes the Secretary-General's recent report (S/2013/149). We reiterate our full support for the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, and for her priorities of fostering political leadership and action and deepening national ownership, leadership and responsibility. We welcome the work of the Team of Experts and strongly support their efforts, especially those aimed at strengthening the capacity of national rule-of-law and justice institutions. We would also like to underline the important role played by United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, the network of 13 United Nations entities, including UN-Women, chaired by Special Representative Bangura. Greater coordination is vital to improving global efforts to meet this challenge.

I would like to touch on Japan's primary policy. Conflict-related sexual violence should be tackled by the international community as a whole. Japan places great emphasis on this issue. As our Foreign Minister stated in a recent speech on foreign policy, Japan will continue to address this issue, and will participate actively in international initiatives on human rights issues, including the protection of women's rights. Last month, Japan announced a new contribution of $4.5 million for programmes aimed at preventing sexual violence and supporting victims in countries such as Libya, Somalia, the Central African Republic and Mali.

Japan condemns attacks on women's human rights defenders and emphasizes that Member States should take steps to ensure the protection of such defenders. We also recognize the importance of multisectoral services for victims of sexual violence. In that regard, our recent contribution addresses various needs of victims, including, for example, the establishment of relief and recovery systems for legal support and mental-health care in camps for refugees and internally displaced persons.

Japan strongly supports the idea of shifting the stigma attached to crimes of sexual violence off the victims and onto the perpetrators. We also support efforts to comprehensively address cultures of impunity. In that regard, Japan has, for instance, been supporting Afghanistan's Ministry of Women's Affairs in implementing its law on the elimination of violence against women.

As was pointed out in the Secretary-General's report, addressing sexual violence in the context of security sector reform processes is of key importance. Over the past five years, Japan has provided $900 million to help support the Afghanistan National Police, part of which has been used for employing and training female police officers. So far, more than 1,400 female police officers have been hired. And in Africa, for example, Japan has been supporting capacity-building and training for Somalia's security officers in the areas of sexual and gender-based violence and the abuse and exploitation of children.

Before concluding, I am very pleased to announce that Japan has begun to develop a national action plan based on resolution 1325 (2000). We are hard at work on the plan, which includes our commitment to further strengthening our efforts to help protect women's rights in humanitarian settings. We are in close consultation with United Nations organizations such as UN-Women, and hope to complete the plan as soon as possible.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would first like to congratulate my colleague Ambassador Eugène-Richard Gasana on his leadership of the Security Council for this month. I also welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Rwanda to preside over today's important meeting. I also welcome Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special

Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflicts.

My country has examined the Secretary-General's report on sexual violence in armed conflict (S/2013/149) and the information it contains, submitted by the Special Representative. We support all efforts aimed at putting an end to all forms of the crime of sexual violence in conflict, ending impunity and punishing perpetrators and those who incite such violence. However, we also call for extreme care and objectivity in addressing this grave humanitarian issue, which has reached serious levels in more than one place. Perpetrators must be held accountable and brought to justice, whether for crimes committed in the jails of Abu Ghraib in Iraq or in any other place.

The report of the Secretary-General includes seven paragraphs concerning my country. The allegations contained in the report were based on reports by the independent international commission of inquiry in 2012 and 2013. My country would like to stress that the work of that commission since its inception was not professional; rather, it was primarily politically motivated. The commission rejected hundreds of compelling documents and evidence submitted by the Government of Syria regarding crimes committed by armed terrorist groups. It conveniently selected inaccurate claims, as the Special Representative herself admitted, and chose to use inaccurate sources implicated in terrorism and the bloodletting of Syrian citizens. In its conclusions, the commission relied on unofficial, inaccurate reports submitted by opposition parties and sources hostile to the Syrian State and the Syrian people. For the Council's information, I would like to mention that the commission has to date not visited Syria.

The Government of Syria has outlined those serious lapses to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as to the commission of inquiry in an official and documented manner. But the commission has ignored all that, for unknown reasons. My delegation addressed several official letters to Special Representative Zainab Hawa Bangura that included documented information on the responsibility of armed terrorist groups for committing acts of rape, sexual assault and killing of Syrian women and girls. Those armed groups have become proficient at kidnapping Syrian women and girls and exploiting them as sexual handmaidens for the entertainment of terrorists.

At the same time, the advocates of those armed terrorist groups, the jihadi thugs and perverts in some Gulf sheikhdoms, issue open religious edicts on satellite television channels sanctioning their crimes under the guise of what they call sexual religious warfare or sexual intercourse religious campaigns. That morally and socially perverse behaviour has been met by unwarranted responses by many United Nations specialized agencies. It is no longer acceptable for this suspicious silence to continue.

In that regard, I would like to raise some questions. Why did the Special Representative choose to ignore the statement she issued on 15 February under the headline "Syria, release kidnapped women and children and protect them from sexual violence". In the statement, she documented an incident involving the kidnapping of a bus carrying no fewer than 40 civilians, most of them women and children, by armed groups in north-western Syria. Why did the Special Representative choose to ignore the hundreds of reports that have been issued in the course of the two years of the crisis by Western media sources that document violations by terrorist groups of the rights of Syrian women and girls? Why did the Special Representative choose to disregard the admissions by armed groups themselves of having committing sexual assaults and rapes — contained in documented videos posted on the Internet — in which those crimes were part of the Takfiri fundamentalist ideology they seek to promote? Why did the Special Representative avoid shining a light on the violations committed by the countries hosting displaced Syrians and Syrian refugees of their obligations under international conventions related to the protection of the rights of women, children and refugees?

We had sincerely hoped that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General would have publicly presented the violations of the rights of Syrian women and girls in refugee camps in neighbouring countries. For example, there were more than 250 documented cases in which Syrian women in a Turkish refugee camp had been impregnated by Turkish supervisors and their terrorist associates. We had hoped that there would have been references to violations against Syrian girls in Jordanian refugee camps, of the serious violations by means of systematic acts of rape by false religious groups wearing religious garb, and of Syrian women being forced to enter into forced marriages, in some cases involving girls under the age of 14. That is in addition to the inappropriate exploitation of the suffering of Syrian families in another Arab State where documented reports have referred to the marriage of more than 12,000 underage Syrian girls in the course of one year — on the basis of false edicts and pernicious calls by clerics in certain mosques who are followers of Salafi and Wahhabi movements. It is as if the only way to provide humanitarian assistance by those demagogic religious idiots is through religious sexual warfare.

In conclusion, my homeland, Syria, would like to seriously deal with those horrendous and egregious violations of human rights. Syria would like to cooperate with the United Nations, especially with Ms. Zainab Bangura, in order to expose the true events unfolding in Syria in a manner free of sensationalism and politicization and divorced from the agenda of influential Powers in this international Organization. We therefore look forward to her forthcoming visit to Syria as the beginning of an optimal way of cooperating and ascertaining correct information on the sexual violence committed by armed terrorist groups against the Syrian people.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): First of all, I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Rwanda for having presided over this very important open debate. I thank also Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his report on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149), as well as his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for her briefing.

I would like to highlight some key proposals and strategies to minimize the prevalence of sexual violence in conflict. Sexual violence is a global phenomenon in times of peace and war and in post-conflict phases. It also affects my region and demands our urgent attention.

Promoting the rights of women is at the core of my country's human rights policy. Kazakhstan, as a member of the Executive Board of UN-Women, has repeatedly voiced the need to accelerate the implementation of global gender commitments. Those include the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (see A/S-23/10/Rev.1), the Millennium Development Goals, the Beijing Platform for Action, the 2013 Commission on the Status of Women follow-up process, and resolutions 1325 (2000), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010) — all of which touch upon sexual violence in conflict. To implement them, Member States must live up to their commitments and actions. Closer interaction is needed among the Council and the Special Representative, UN-Women, the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as country teams on the ground.

The Council is taking a positive step by expanding its work at the level of Sanctions Committees by considering sexual violence and rape as designation criteria in various sanctions regimes, as a tool to enhance accountability. It is therefore obligatory on such committees to reinforce those criteria. To succeed, there has to be better information sharing among the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Sanctions Committees and their associated expert groups. The submission of names of perpetrators should be followed up on without delay, and without impunity being granted to State or non-State actors.

It would help to have at least one gender expert on every Sanctions Committee and peacekeeping mission or political office in the field. Resources must be allocated to that end. Likewise, the women and peace and security agenda should be incorporated into the terms of reference of Security Council visiting missions when interacting with interlocutors and stakeholders.

It is noteworthy that provisions for protection against gender-based violence and violence against women and children were incorporated into article 7, paragraph 4, of the Arms Trade Treaty, which regulates the transfer of major types of weapons and which the General Assembly adopted earlier this month. The 2001 Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons must also begin to reflect a gender-sensitive perspective, like the Arms Trade Treaty, because armed sexual violence in armed conflict totally devastates women and children. For significant results to accrue, each tool should not to be implemented piecemeal but taken as part of a unified, consolidated and comprehensive approach. United Nations system-wide coherence on gender-based violence in conflict, combining synergy with regional organizations, intergovernmental bodies and key stakeholders, would result in strengthened mechanisms for monitoring, reporting and implementation.

At the same time, we need to facilitate and reinforce women's participation, through their local networks and groups, by assessing and overcoming factors that impede their effective involvement. Hurdles created by a lack of resources, access to information and security itself can be counteracted through the inclusion of women's groups in strategies for conflict prevention, resolution and recovery, especially in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, through training and capacity-building.

In conclusion, we commend the Security Council's continuing attention to the urgent and crucial issue of women and peace and security and strengthening it on its ongoing agenda.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Govender (South Africa): We congratulate Rwanda on assuming the presidency of the Council and express our appreciation to Ms. Louise Mushikiwabo, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, for joining us today. We join others in commending the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for the contributions she has made in such a short space of time since taking up her position.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2013/149) underscores the reality that sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict settings remains systemic and widespread, where women and girls continue to bear the greater burden of the consequences of conflict. It is with that in mind that my delegation reaffirms our commitment to the full and effective implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010) as the building blocks for advancing the women, peace and security agenda.

My delegation notes with concern the emerging challenges highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General. They include, among others, increasing incidents of sexual violence committed against men and boys, particularly in the context of detention, the practice of forced marriage by armed groups, and the linkages between sexual violence and illicit natural resource extraction.

My delegation is pleased at the progress made on the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements and on their potential to serve as an early-warning and conflict-prevention tool. A continuous review of the impact that women protection advisers make in the field would be instructive for closing the protection gaps in the context of sexual violence in conflict. It is also our view that women protection advisers could add value to peacekeeping mission assessment visits.

My delegation supports the recommendation by the Secretary-General that sexual violence in conflict be reflected in all the relevant country resolutions, as well as in authorizations and renewals of the mandates of peacekeeping and special political missions. Equally, we will continue to advocate for the inclusion of sexual violence in the definition of acts prohibited by ceasefires and that it be monitored as part of ceasefire monitoring mechanisms. In that regard, we also highlight the important contribution that women can and must make in all processes of conflict resolution and in post-conflict settings.

We also reaffirm our commitment to support efforts by the Secretary-General towards the implementation of the policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Justice for the victims of serious violations of international human rights law is an essential requirement for the sustainable peace, security and development of States emerging from armed conflict, where the rule of law must enjoy primacy and be scrupulously upheld. Therefore, my delegation supports efforts by the Council to continue fighting impunity for the most serious crimes committed against women and children through the work of the International Criminal Court, ad hoc and mixed tribunals and specialized chambers in national tribunals.

We recognize the importance of women's access to justice in conflict and post-conflict settings, including through gender-responsive legal, judicial and security sector reform and other mechanisms. In that regard, my delegation appreciates the commendable work undertaken by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. However, we believe that significantly more needs to be done by all the relevant actors in supporting countries to increase women's participation, leadership and expertise in transitional justice, as well as in advancing accountability measures for serious offences committed against women and children.

We support efforts undertaken by the Council towards ensuring that more systematic attention be given to the implementation of women, peace and security commitments in its own work. The integration of appropriate gender perspectives into the mandates of the relevant peacekeeping missions, as well as in other thematic areas of peace and security, would positively advance that objective.

Much work needs to be done to narrow the substantive implementation deficits that still remain. The burden of responsibility rests on the stakeholder community, including the Council, to ensure measurable progress on the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions in the broader context of the women, peace and security agenda and the laudable objectives it aspires to achieve.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Fernandes (Brazil): I thank the Rwandan presidency for convening this debate on such an important issue for international peace and security. I also thank the Secretary-General for his remarks and his comprehensive report (S/2013/149) on sexual violence in armed conflict. We are grateful to Special Representative Bangura for her presentation and her dedication to this cause. We would also like to express our appreciation to the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for her statement.

The Security Council's engagement with the issue of women and peace and security has greatly contributed to our common efforts to improve the lives of women in conflict situations around the world. The resolutions adopted by the Council have not only created a comprehensive body of norms and tools, but have also stimulated discussion, self-criticism and progress on the protection and promotion of women's rights.

Today we focus our attention on one of the most appalling aspects of the women and peace and security agenda: the problem of sexual violence in conflict. The challenge when discussing this scourge is to translate our sorrow and outrage into practical action capable of bringing about real change. Only an integrated approach that combines a sharper focus on prevention, the fight against impunity and better support to victims can help us fight sexual violence in conflict in an effective and decisive manner.

Prevention is always the best remedy. It involves, in the first place, strengthening national capacities, addressing the needs of States in terms of institution-building, training personnel, supporting victims and promoting the rule of law. Developing national awareness-raising activities and information campaigns to break taboos and misperceptions around the issue is also important.

Prevention also involves tackling the disturbing relationship between the widespread availability of illicit small arms and light weapons and conflict-related sexual violence. We acknowledge the progress achieved by the adoption of the landmark Arms Trade Treaty, which establishes that conventional arms should not be exported when they might be used to commit or facilitate gender-based violence. We regret, however, that it was not possible to include in the Treaty a clear prohibition of transfers to unauthorized non-State actors, as such a provision would greatly contribute to the objective of preventing the commission of sexual violence in conflict.

Peacekeeping operations are another important pillar contributing to the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence. Local populations and international public opinion have high expectations concerning the role of United Nations peacekeepers in preventing sexual violence. In that regard, adequate training remains key, not only to ensure that peacekeepers acquire a proper understanding of how to address cases of sexual violence, but also to enable them to apply concrete prevention strategies.

That preventive role requires resources compatible with the magnitude of the tasks involved. Brazil has taken some meaningful steps. We have signed a letter of intent with UN-Women to deepen our cooperation regarding the training of peacekeepers on gender issues and the promotion of South-South cooperation on gender issues involving peacekeeping training centres in Latin America and Africa. Furthermore, Brazil has been involved in cooperation activities with a number of countries emerging from conflict in areas related to sexual violence. The Brazilian Cooperation Agency has, for instance, been working with the United Nations Population Fund in Haiti and Guinea-Bissau to build institutional capacity to deal with victims of gender-based violence in areas such as health, justice and security.

As an important element in efforts to achieve justice, the fight against impunity is essential as a means to put an end to sexual violence in conflict. It acts as a deterrent for perpetrators and contributes to righting the wrongs done to victims. Brazil appreciates the work that Ms. Bangura's Office carries out in support of the strengthening of national capacities aimed at bringing perpetrators to justice. The Security Council can assist in fighting impunity by addressing such violence in its subsidiary bodies as appropriate. More discussion is needed, however, on the idea of adopting targeted and gradual measures in contexts where no sanctions regimes are in place, as that could amount to applying restrictive measures in situations that have not been determined by the Security Council to constitute threats to international peace and security.

Dealing with sexual violence requires that we act on many fronts simultaneously. Over the past few years, the international community has made important normative progress, which has allowed us to reframe the issue of sexual violence in different terms. We must now work more effectively to implement those norms. Brazil is committed to this cause and is ready to work in line with Security Council provisions with the goal of effectively addressing sexual violence in conflict situations in all its aspects.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Aisi (Papua New Guinea): Papua New Guinea appreciates the opportunity to participate in today's important meeting on women and peace and security and thanks you, Mr. President, and your delegation, for organizing it. This meeting follows on from others that we have participated in since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), including the open debate on women and peace and security held on 30 November 2012 (see S/PV.6877), which also commemorated the twelfth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000).

The focus of this debate is to address the obstacles to women's participation in conflict mediation, peace talks, national dialogue and donor conferences. We believe that it is important to sustain the momentum to consolidate efforts at all levels so as to effectively mainstream women as equal development partners and agents of change in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, peacekeeping and nation-building for safer and more prosperous communities and a safer and more prosperous world. A clear case in point is the excellent contributions by women to last month's successful conclusion and adoption of the first-ever global Arms Trade Treaty.

We also agree with the Secretary-General's conclusions in his 2010 report on women's participation in peacebuilding (S/2010/466) that their participation is not only a matter of women's and girls' rights but of their status as core partners in strengthening the three pillars of durable peace, namely, economic recovery, social cohesion and political legitimacy.

We note the important, albeit slow, strides made internationally over the past decade in addressing the disproportionate and unique impacts of armed conflict, violence and tensions, which continue to affect women and girls worldwide.

Women's and girls' protection and empowerment, particularly in fragile, conflict and post-conflict situations — and even in so-called stable societies — remain a major concern and an overriding challenge for all of us. Noble initiatives such as resolution 1325 (2000), the 2010 United Nations seven-point action plan on gender-responsive peacebuilding and other international, regional and national peace and security frameworks that place women and girls at the centre of peace and security continue to remain largely unfulfilled.

The unfortunate and sobering reality today is that women are still part of the battleground. They are marginalized, harassed, raped, abducted, humiliated, killed and forced to endure unwanted pregnancies, sexual abuse and slavery. Women are also still largely excluded from formal decision-making processes concerning peace and security.

The challenge for all of us today going forward is to work diligently with renewed commitment to heighten efforts to, among other actions, better institutionalize all the various processes so that they become integral parts of national and regional actions.

In the context of my own country, Papua New Guinea, I would like to share our experience with regard to women and peace and security in the framework of the civil conflict we experienced in Bougainville, which ended more than a decade ago. With the election of the first President and members of the Parliament of the Autonomous Bougainville Government, the Council, on 6 July 2005, successfully concluded the mandate it had initiated to resolve the decade-long bloody conflict on Bougainville Island in Papua New Guinea.

It is worth mentioning that the Bougainville Peace Agreement, despite some challenges, is being implemented with full commitment at the highest political levels by the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government. We are equally pleased with the continuing interest and engagement of the United Nations with the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government to address outstanding issues, including arms disposal, reconstruction and the holding of a referendum.

Importantly, it is worth recalling that the efforts of the women of Bougainville in pushing for peace during the conflict, which culminated in the Bougainville Peace Agreement, attest to and confirm the notion that women are agents of change, including in peace and security. Fortunately, there is growing recognition of that fact, but, as always, more needs to be done to maintain the momentum.

I would also commend the support and cooperation that Papua New Guinea continues to receive from our bilateral development partners, including Australia, the United States, New Zealand, the European Union and others, on mainstreaming gender issues that contribute to peace, security and national development. Likewise, we value similar support from regional multilateral development partners, such as the Pacific Islands Forum and the Melanesian Spearhead Group.

At the regional level, the launch of the 2012-2015 Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, in 2012, has provided a strong framework from which national and regional actions can be better and more effectively developed and coordinated. The Action Plan was developed jointly by representatives of the member countries of the Pacific Islands Forum, representatives of the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific and, importantly, civil society organizations. In essence, the Action Plan replicates the basic, but important, tenets of resolution 1325 (2000) as elaborated by the United Nations.

In that regard, we acknowledge the leadership of Ms. Bachelet and the work of UN-Women in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific, as reflected in her attendance at our Pacific Leaders' Summit — to represent the Secretary-General — held in the Cooks Islands last year. Such proactive participation has yielded positive dividends, which include the increasing involvement of women as partners in consolidating peace and security in our region.

Apart from the United Nations, we continue to have strong support from our development partners — Australia and New Zealand, along with other partners such as the European Union — which are prioritizing gender empowerment and equality by providing capacity-building programmes for our women and girls in the area of peace and security. The challenge will be the effective coordination of all the valuable resources, so that all the efforts to implement the full intent of resolution 1325 (2000) are properly realized.

Insofar as civil society efforts to promote issues relating to women, peace and security in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific islands region are concerned, they are increasing as a result of the groundswell of advocacy work on fostering women's and girls' development issues, including the important role they play in fostering peace and security in our communities and country.

An exemplary group that I wish to acknowledge here is the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency, which is based in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, as well as the FemLINKPACIFIC organization based in Fiji, along with many other women's committees whose collective membership contributes to that important work. At the end of the day, their respective collective contributions will enhance the work we must all continue to do to consolidate the vision of resolution 1325 (2000).

Allow me to conclude by acknowledging the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security here today.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Solomon Islands.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands): Let me, first of all acknowledge your country's leadership, Sir, in convening this open debate on women and peace and security, with special emphasis on sexual violence in conflict zones. Solomon Islands is contributing to the debate as a country emerging from conflict. While stamping out sexual violence from any conflict is our global responsibility, the primary responsibility, as rightly pointed out by the Secretary-General, rests with States. Solomon Islands continues to tackle the issue of sexual violence in the context of its gender-based violence national framework.

Solomon Islands is a culturally diverse country of more than half a million people who speak 87 different languages. We have also established the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace, as well as the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs.

As Council members may be aware, Solomon Islands continues to work in partnership with the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI), which is led by Australia, one of the sitting members of the Council. The Regional Assistance Mission is also supported by New Zealand and all of the neighbouring Pacific small island developing States. The Regional Assistance Mission is provided for under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. My country extends its sincere gratitude to all its Pacific neighbours.

The success of the Solomon Islands/RAMSI partnership in peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peacemaking speaks for itself. My country's economy has been growing over the years. After 10 years of operations, the Regional Assistance Mission is undergoing a transitional phase. The military component will be withdrawing from the country, while the police and civilian components will remain.

The Solomon Islands Police Force has a new look, thanks to special outreach efforts to women in terms of recruitment. Today, the acting head of our Police Force is a woman, a first for Solomon Islands. It is a small step, but an important one. Even more, it is fulfilling one of the six goals of UN-Women, that is,k strengthening the leadership of women in peace and security.

That also speaks of the rich experience that the women of my country have gained during the height of our ethnic conflict. They appealed for peace, as women in parts of the country suffered from sexual violence.

We just completed the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women last month, whose agreed conclusions speak of how violent the world has become. Seven out of 10 women suffer from gender violence. Sexual violence, unfortunately, has gone viral. Two out of three women in Solomon Islands suffer from gender-based violence. Solomon Islands has responded by establishing a specific policy on the elimination of gender violence as a subsidiary of our gender equality and women's development policy.

The elimination of gender-based violence is a shared responsibility. We are tackling the issues, working with all stakeholders to address the issue of rape and sexual violence with a strong campaign to prevent it, protect victims and deal with perpetrators. Solomon Islands has institutionalized Government-wide structures to deal with the issue nationally, working with all the relevant stakeholders. We have in place a national steering committee to monitor the progress in the implementation of the policy, which reports to the national task force.

Solomon Islands is also a member of the g7+ countries promoting the New Deal agreed to in Busan. We hope that that framework will address the root causes of conflicts.

Let me conclude by highlighting one of the challenges facing our world today, namely, climate change. Climate change cuts across all three pillars of the multilateral system and is serving to disempower women, especially as land is being swallowed up by the rise in sea-levels. To date, the Organization's response to disaster-risk management has been directed to sudden-onset events, rather than to the slow-onset events such as climate change. We hope to see a change of approach in that area. Finally, Solomon Islands would like to say that we join others in condemning sexual violence, wherever it may occur.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mr. Le Hoai Trung (Viet Nam): It gives me great honour and pleasure to speak on behalf of the 10 member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and my own country, Viet Nam.

At the outset, we would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate on the important issue of women, peace and security. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2013/149), which provides a useful basis for our deliberations. We extend our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for their comprehensive briefings.

Sexual violence in armed conflict is not a new phenomenon and has occurred in several corners of the world. Sexual violence in armed conflict has harmful and lasting economic, social, cultural and health consequences for victims, families and communities, even after the conflict stage has ended. We are deeply concerned about the dire plight of women and girls in situations of armed conflict. We condemn all violence against women in armed conflicts, including sexual violence. We recognize the urgent need to address their plight.

ASEAN member States wish to reiterate their strong commitment to working closely with the international community and the United Nations in ending sexual violence, wherever it occurs. Our States have been supportive of efforts to eliminate and prevent all acts of violence against women. ASEAN attaches great importance to the implementation of landmark resolution 1325 (2000) and the subsequent resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010). ASEAN supports the continued efforts of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the relevant United Nations bodies to advance the women, peace and security agenda in accordance with their respective mandates.

At the national and regional levels, ASEAN member States have been establishing legal and policy frameworks and implementing mechanisms to further enhance the status and welfare of women and girls and to eliminate all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence. Those efforts have been strengthened by the adoption of various declarations, including the Declaration on the Advancement of Women in ASEAN, in 1988; the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the ASEAN Region, in 2004; and the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, in 2012.

Also, the Association established the ASEAN Committee on Women, in 2002, and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, in 2009. All those bodies aim to uphold, promote, protect and ensure respect for and the fulfilment of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and children in the ASEAN area. In that context, ASEAN member States would like to underline the following.

First, the fundamental causes of sexual violence in armed conflict should be tackled at their root. A preventive mechanism that addresses the root causes of armed conflict should be implemented. ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, which aims to promote perpetual peace, everlasting amity and cooperation among its people, is a regional framework that we have put in place to that end. Such root causes should be addressed, inter alia, by promoting the rule of law, good governance, democracy, poverty eradication, sustainable development and respect for and the protection of human rights, as well as by providing multisectoral assistance and services for the specific needs of women and girls.

Secondly, preventing and eradicating sexual violence against women are closely linked to women's empowerment and to gender equality. ASEAN views women as agents of change, who should participate, in a full and equal part, in peace, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict processes. In that regard, the continued efforts of the international community to address sexual violence in armed conflict must be supported.

Most recently, the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women adopted the agreed conclusions on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. That document was widely hailed by Governments, United Nations officials and civil society as a huge step forward and a historic global agreement in the ongoing efforts to protect women and girls from violence.

Thirdly, ASEAN member countries are of the view that States must bear responsibility and do their utmost to prevent and address sexual violence in armed conflict. The United Nations and the international community can play a supporting role by providing assistance, by sharing best practices and by helping States to exercise that responsibility.

Let me conclude by stressing ASEAN's readiness and commitment to join efforts with the international community to ensure the elimination of sexual violence in armed conflict and to implement effective measures of accountability and redress in the field of women and peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Seger (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland would like to congratulate and thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as her entire team, for the work that provided the basis for the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/149).

We welcome the Special Representative's commitment to continuing the work started by her predecessor. We think that recognizing sexual violence as a tactic and a consequence of war remains vital to undertaking the real preventive action that is so urgently needed.

The Human Security Report Project, in its report entitled "Sexual violence, education and war: beyond the mainstream narrative", provides a valuable recommendation in that regard. It highlights the need to better understand what causes the differences in wartime sexual violence rates from one conflict to another.

We furthermore welcome the fact that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has added to her priorities the fostering of national ownership, leadership and responsibility in combating sexual violence.

We note with interest the important link that the report makes between sexual violence and active population displacement. It brings to light the link between sexual violence and forced displacement and the exploitation of natural resources. The Secretary-General makes useful recommendations. Allow me to highlight three of those.

First, we strongly welcome the fact that the Secretary-General expresses the need for the women and girls who have been victims of rape to have access to emergency contraception and safe abortion services. They should not be forced to continue a pregnancy as a result of a serious crime against them. All too often, they receive no reparation or any kind of support from their own communities or from the international community. At the same time, where women and girls who have decided to continue their pregnancies cannot look after their children, steps to protect the rights of those children, including providing for national adoption, must be taken.

That leads me to my second point, on reparations. They can have a transformative effect and should be an integral part of post-conflict transition initiatives. As UN-Women explained in a recent document, reparations are the most victim-centred transitional justice measures. In that connection, we are obliged to think beyond the traditional approach. Humanitarian aid, peacebuilding and development must be effectively linked in order to achieve a real impact, namely, the empowerment of women.

Thirdly, and finally, Switzerland heeds the Secretary-General's call for the recruitment of women's protection advisers as members of United Nations assessment teams. We draw attention to the Justice Rapid Response initiative. It is an intergovernmental support mechanism that can provide the international community and the Security Council with rapidly deployable expertise. In cooperation with UN-Women and the Institute for International Criminal Investigations, the initiative has set up a roster of sexual and gender-based violence experts from various backgrounds. Switzerland is one of the countries that initiated the Justice Rapid Response initiative, which can contribute to the implementation of obligations arising from resolutions 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010).

In conclusion, I would like to recall the significant thematic connection between the discussions on sexual violence in armed conflict and the protection of civilians. We commend the fact that the Security Council takes into account the link between those two topics through a consistent approach.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in this debate on specific measures to prevent, punish and eradicate sexual violence in conflicts. It is an issue of great concern that affects sensitive areas, such as the protection of civilians in all kinds of armed conflict, the displacement of populations and peacebuilding processes, without forgetting its undeniable connection with other scourges, such as trafficking in persons.

Spain welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149) and supports its recommendations. Similarly, Spain commends the commitment of the new Special Representative, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, to the priorities developed by her predecessor, Ms. Wahlström. Spain also shares the new goal set by Ms. Bangura of promoting national ownership in the fight against sexual violence in conflict, which is key to obtaining lasting results. Ms. Bangura can count on my country's full support for her work.

Combating sexual violence in conflict requires the adoption of measures for the prevention, protection and prosecution of the perpetrators. In all those areas, the victims' cooperation is essential. However, as the Secretary-General's report points out, the lack of adequate information and fear of reporting for cultural and social reasons, which tend to increase in times of conflict, are serious obstacles to such collaboration. We must therefore, to the greatest extent possible, reinforce mechanisms designed to help victims, raise awareness about their surroundings and strengthen the capacity of national courts.

Spain also shares the conclusions of the report regarding the role of the International Criminal Court. While the primary responsibility for the trial of suspects for acts of sexual violence lies with national courts, the Court plays a crucial complementary role at the international level.

As I already mentioned, Spain fully supports the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General, but would like to highlight those that relate to the need to define a mechanism to monitor the obligations of parties to conflict as set forth in resolution 1960 (2010) — including the possibility of referring cases to the International Criminal Court — and in particular to those pertaining to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and security sector reform. I also wish to stress the importance of the role of the International Criminal Court, as acknowledged in the recent conclusions agreed to in the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

In the open debate on women, peace and security held last fall at the Security Council (see S/PV.6877), we referred to the numerous initiatives that Spain had been leading in its foreign policy, development cooperation and defence policy with a view to achieving two goals — first, to promote the role of women in peacebuilding in conflict and post-conflict situations, and, secondly, to eliminate sexual violence in conflicts, including the outrageous practice of using systematic rape as a war tactic.

Focusing now on the second goal, Spain believes that it is a priority to implement specific programmes to eradicate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls, while giving special attention to extreme situations such as trafficking, sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. I would also like to highlight our unconditional support for the work of UN-Women in its campaign against sexual violence in armed conflict.

Spain has generously contributed to the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund, which has provided $94 million for 20 conflict prevention and peacebuilding programmes in as many countries around the world.

In the area of training, I would emphasize the specific seminar on the gender perspective in peace operations that is being jointly organized by the Ministries for Foreign Affairs and Defence of Spain and the Netherlands. The fifth edition of the seminar will be held soon and will have a specific module on sexual violence in conflict.

I would conclude by referring to a particularly vulnerable group in the area of sexual violence, namely, people with disabilities, who are even more vulnerable in a context of conflict. On 23 September, a high level meeting will be held on achieving the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities. Spain, together with the Philippines, has the honour of having been appointed to co-facilitate the outcome document of that meeting. It will undoubtedly be the best opportunity to discuss a new development agenda that takes into account the imperative of combating discrimination against persons with disabilities.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt): At the outset, Mr. President, allow me to express our appreciation for your initiative to convene today's meeting. Our appreciation also goes to Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Ms. Saran Keïta Diakité, representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

Our meeting today is very timely in that it comes nearly one month after the adoption of the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women, which reflects the international community's firm stance against all forms and manifestations of violence against women and girls in all contexts, settings and circumstances, including crimes of sexual violence in conflict.

The report of the Secretary-General, entitled "Sexual violence in conflict" (S/2013/149), which was been presented by his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, highlights several concerns emerging this year, including the perpetration of sexual violence against men and boys as a tactic of war or in the context of detention or interrogation, children born as a result of rape in wartime, and the practice of forced marriages by armed groups. It also draws attention to the nexus between sexual violence and the illicit extraction of natural resources, the displacement of civilian populations, the inadequacy of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform efforts, and the challenge of sexual violence being universally underreported for reasons that include the risk of reprisal.

The report responds to those emerging concerns through a set of important recommendations that include ensuring the deployment of women's protection advisers in United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions, thereby systematically responding to sexual violence in conflict in all the relevant situations. In that regard, my delegation would like to express its appreciation for the efforts exerted by Ms. Bangura and her team in the preparation of the first report since she assumed her responsibilities, which took into account the concerns expressed by Members States last year regarding the mandate of the Special Representative.

Sexual violence in conflict represents one of the most serious forms of violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Such violations cause a lifetime of pain that cannot be healed. In that regard, Egypt stresses the importance of implementing policies of zero-tolerance for sexual violence, ensuring that all perpetrators be held accountable, whether they be the ones who committed, ordered or condoned such crimes, and that all perpetrators be pursued by any and all possible means. Despite the Security Council's unique ability to impose targeted sanctions on perpetrators as an important part of deterrence, Egypt emphasizes the importance of adopting preventive measures to address the spread of sexual violence in conflict as a priority. There is an urgent need to support the Member States concerned in preventing sexual violence, in ensuring zero tolerance for it and in prosecuting its perpetrators.

Egypt also believes that it is of importance to address sexual violence issues in the early phases of peace processes, in mediation efforts and in ceasefire and peace agreements, particularly in provisions on security arrangements, transitional justice and reparations. Increased attention must be paid to the survivors of sexual violence in conflict situations as an integral part of States' obligations towards them, including by setting up mechanisms aimed at preventing the recurrence of such crimes and by providing them with all the services and assistance they need, including rehabilitation and reintegration support.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Schaper (Netherlands): My delegation welcomes today's debate. While we align ourselves with the statement made earlier by the observer of the European Union (EU), we would like to make some remarks in our national capacity that complement those made by the observer of the EU and other speakers underlining the importance of the topic of women, peace and security.

The Netherlands has for decades put gender equality at the heart of all its policies. Internationally, we support female leadership, the follow-up of resolution 1325 (2000), women's economic empowerment and the elimination of sexual violence against women. Equal rights and opportunities for women and their full participation in society and decision-making are important not just for the security of women; women are powerful agents for peace, stability and prosperity in any society.

Violence against women, especially sexual violence, has an enormous impact on many aspects of family and society. For example, it is used to this day as a weapon of war to break down societies.

The Netherlands welcomes the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Sexual violence in conflict" (S/2013/149) and in particular supports its recommendations in four areas.

First, we support enhancing monitoring, research and reporting, as well as putting in place an appropriate mechanism or procedure by the Security Council to systematically monitor commitments by parties to conflict so as to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence.

Secondly, we advocate involving civil society organizations and effective cooperation with the signatories of national action plans.

Thirdly, we support the recommendations on increasing attention given to the role of small arms, as was successfully done in the negotiations on the Arms Trade Treaty.

Fourthly, we favour strengthening the role of the International Criminal Court as the ultimate resort in fighting impunity against the most serious crimes.

Because of the important role of women, since 2007 the Netherlands has invested in national action plans, together with civil society organizations, research institutions and other Government institutions — altogether more than 40 partners. The objective of those partnerships is to create an enabling environment in which women are better able to take a leading role and to participate in political decision-making processes. Within the United Nations, the Netherlands wants to continue its proactive role within the United Nations Human Rights Council, the General Assembly and the Commission on the Status of Women. We are also committed, and a long-term supporter of, the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Estonia.

Mr. Kolga (Estonia): At the outset, let me thank the Secretary-General; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura; and Ms. Saran Keïta Diakité, of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for their briefings.

Estonia aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

Estonia is dedicated to protecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms, both nationally and internationally. As a member of the Human Rights Council, Estonia's particular focus is on the rights of women and children, gender perspective in conflict settlement and the fight against impunity.

Estonia is proud of having been a sponsor of resolution 1820 (2008), on women and peace and security, wherein for the first time in a Security Council resolution sexual violence was recognized as a tactic of war and where it is noted that rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide. We welcome the numerous steps taken in this field within the framework of the United Nations and commend, among other things, the work of UN-Women and the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Concerning the latest developments in the United Nations, we welcome the adoption of the agreed conclusions of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in which the Commission urged States to strongly condemn violence against women and girls committed in armed conflict and post-conflict situations and called for effective measures of accountability and redress, as well as effective remedies.

Estonia is also very satisfied that the Arms Trade Treaty, recently adopted by the General Assembly, includes strong human rights and international humanitarian law criteria. In assessing the export of conventional arms, each country has to take into account the risk of those arms being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children. We believe that the effective implementation of the Treaty will make a difference in the world. We urge States to apply the relevant articles that are provisionally pending prior to the Treaty's entry into force.

We appreciate the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/149) on which today's discussion is based. The report gives a shiver-raising overview of how widespread the terrible scourge of sexual violence still is. It also pointedly highlights emerging concerns such as the plight of children born out of rape, the practice of forced marriages by armed groups, sexual violence against men and boys, the displacement of civilian populations and the inadequacy of disarmament efforts. We note with serious concern that, as reported, sexual violence has been used to force internal and cross-border displacement in many places of the world and that women and children are also targeted both inside and outside refugee and internally displaced persons camps and settlements.

We share the assessment of Special Representative that fostering national ownership, leadership and responsibility in addressing sexual violence are some of the most important aspects in the fight against sexual violence. It is essential that local communities consider sexual violence as a crime. Regrettably, as noted in the report, often, as a consequence of being raped in conflict, there are reports of coerced marriages of survivors to either the perpetrator or their family members. It is certain, as the report also notes, that compelling rape survivors to marry the perpetrators re-victimizes them. That results in impunity for perpetrators and sends the message that sexual violence is socially acceptable.

There is a wide range of tools available for preventing crimes of sexual violence, as well as for holding perpetrators accountable. The use of targeted sanctions by the Security Council, with a focus on specific individuals or entities suspected of bearing the greatest responsibility for such crimes, is an important aspect of deterrence. We welcome the fact that the Council has expanded its designation criteria to explicitly address sexual and gender-based violence.

We look forward to the consistent application of that tool.

Estonia would welcome having all the Security Council Sanctions Committees consider focusing on crimes of sexual violence. In that context, it might be necessary to harmonize designation criteria for listed individuals and entities by including any relevant charges from the international justice mechanisms and, importantly, from the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The International Criminal Court itself has a unique role in setting a new tone in the fight against impunity for sexual and gender-based violence. The Rome Statute of the ICC prohibits an unprecedented number of gender crimes, including rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization and other forms of sexual violence as war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide.

The Security Council has an important role with regard to the ICC, especially in the field of State cooperation with the Court. We strongly support the Council's calls for State cooperation and its commitment to an effective follow-up to its decisions in that regard. Resolution 2085 (2012), on Mali, and resolution 2098 (2013), on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which called for the establishment of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali and authorized the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, respectively, to support the ICC's efforts, are important examples of the Council's commitment. We hope that the Council will continue to find ways and means to further support international criminal justice within the scope of its mandate.

Allow me to note that Estonia confirms its commitment to ending impunity and fighting sexual violence through its financial contributions in the field as well. In 2013, Estonia contributed financially to a UNICEF project in the Central African Republic for the prevention and response to gender-based violence. Also this year, Estonia will be contributing financially to the activities of the Office of the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and to the ICC Trust Fund for Victims.

In our view, the next important step for the United Nations would be to further implement monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence. We would also urge the further deployment of female protection advisers to Security Council-mandated missions. We must support the non-governmental organizations working in the field and protection for women's human rights defenders. It should also be noted that the overall goal of achieving women's empowerment and participation in society is inextricably linked to the fight against gender-based violence.

I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the Council's work on the issue of women and peace and security, including in the area of sexual violence in conflict, and to confirm my country's strong support for an even more systematic and comprehensive approach to that important issue.

Finally, I would like to remind the Council of something Ms. Bangura said recently: "I am sure there will come a time where the only place we can read about sexual violence in conflict is in the textbooks." Estonia will be there to support that aim.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Rwanda on its presidency of the Security Council for this month. I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on the important issue of women and peace and security. And I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his remarks and the other invited speakers for their valuable briefings on the subject.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Viet Nam on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Malaysia joins other Member States in strongly condemning acts of sexual violence against women and girls. We feel there is an urgent need to address the factors and underlying reasons that such acts continue. More energy should be put into integration efforts, with no groups excluded from participation in disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and security-sector reform. We also agree that policymakers and private entities must do more to help reduce acts of sexual violence related to the extraction of natural resources. At the same time, Malaysia is also deeply concerned about the emerging incidence of sexual violence perpetrated against men and boys, as well as the plight of children born as a result of rape and the practice of forced marriages by armed groups.

It is a worrying trend that sexual violence in those contexts remains universally under-reported, for which a lack of adequate national capacity and expertise for investigating and prosecuting acts of sexual violence remains one of the main causes. Malaysia therefore welcomes the ongoing work of the United Nations and other stakeholders, as well as that of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, which focuses its efforts on strengthening the capacity of national rule-of-law and justice institutions. We feel that engaging with the relevant Governments would strengthen the Team's capacity to effectively address sexual violence against women and girls.

With regard to accountability for crimes related to sexual violence, we feel that accountability requires not only careful investigations and prosecutions of those responsible, but a broader acceptance of political, legal and moral responsibility by individuals and institutions for past violations. Malaysia views accountability as a duty under both domestic and international law. In that regard, national systems should be pushed to meet international standards for ensuring accountability and justice so that perpetrators of such crimes will never go unpunished.

My delegation believes that women's equal, full and active participation is key to peacekeeping and peacebuilding. In that regard, while we acknowledge the existing normative frameworks as represented by the Security Council resolutions pertaining to women and peace and security, we hope we will see a greater impetus towards actual realization of those resolutions, including the landmark resolution 1325 (2000), in order to increase women's participation in the field of peace and security.

In that context, my delegation welcomes the various initiatives and actions undertaken by Member States, United Nations entities, including UN-Women, civil society organizations and other relevant actors that are focused on supporting and increasing the representation of women in peace negotiations and mainstreaming gender perspectives into peace agreements. In recognition of that crucial element, in October 2011 the Malaysian Ministry of Defence and the United Nations Development Programme jointly organized a seminar on promoting peace through mainstreaming the gender perspective in peacekeeping operations. For Malaysia, a country firmly committed to contributing peacekeeping troops to United Nations missions, that seminar on gender and peacekeeping represents our commitment to supporting both the global agenda for gender and peacekeeping as well as policies that support women's development. Additionally, in September, Malaysia, along with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, will jointly host a regional seminar on child protection at the Malaysian Peacekeeping Training Centre in Port Dickson. The seminar, which will include participation by 30 Member States in the Asian region, will officially validate the training module for civilian and military personnel on peacekeeping missions dealing with the protection of children involved in armed conflict.

My delegation is deeply concerned that forced marriage, rape and sexual slavery have been documented in several States in conflict and have occurred under the pretext of Islamic sharia law. Malaysia wishes to emphasize that Islam does not condone forced marriage, rape or sexual slavery in any way. We believe that education is key to reducing the incidence of sexual violence. In the area of education, Malaysia has been working through the Malaysia Australia Education Project for Afghanistan, which aims to enable Afghan women teachers to master English and Islamic teachings. The trainers are playing a critical role in developing the skills of a new generation of female Afghan teachers, who will be role models and mentors for girls in years to come.

In conclusion, Malaysia reaffirms its strong commitment to efforts to address sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, and strongly believes that the issue of women and peace and security deserves the Security Council's sustained attention. In that regard, we will continue to work with others who share a similar interest in advancing that agenda and ensuring the full mainstreaming of women into activities aimed at achieving peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Khan (Indonesia): Allow me to begin by commending the President's work on convening today's debate on the issue of sexual violence in conflict. This timely debate highlights the urgent need to address the various forms of violence perpetrated against women and girls. Despite all the achievements and progress that have been made in promoting the protection and rights of women, such violence persists all over the world. Indonesia also wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his report on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149), which is a valuable starting point for our deliberations today on improving ways to eliminate and prevent violence against women, particularly in conflict situations.

At the outset, Indonesia associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Viet Nam on behalf of the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Indonesia notes with deep concern the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and one that worsens its consequences, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's report. Against that backdrop, Indonesia condemns all forms of violence against women and girls in armed conflicts, particularly sexual violence, which, as the report states, predominantly affects women and girls but can also affect men and boys. We wish to reaffirm our support for resolution 1325 (2000), the first to specifically address the impact of war on women and women's contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace. The follow-up Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security also constitute a milestone for protection and empowerment measures for women in the special situation of conflict.

Indonesia commends the adoption of the agreed conclusions of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), last month, as a manifestation of the intergovernmental efforts that have been made by countries under the United Nations framework. The agreement reached on the agreed conclusions is a step forward in strengthening countries' commitment to tackling violence against women and girls.

The CSW conclusions send a clear and strong message: violence against women and girls committed in armed conflict and post-conflict situations is strongly condemned; sexual and gender-based violence, which affects victims, families, communities and societies, is recognized; and effective accountability and redress measures, as well remedies, are required.

At the national level, Indonesia's national action plan on human rights serves as a strong platform for our commitment to eliminate and prevent violence against women. The process of drafting a presidential decree is ongoing, as a legal basis to formulate a national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). When completed, the action plan, among things, will cover all phases of the peace process — from prevention to ending conflict to recovery from social conflict.

Indonesia wishes to highlight some of the main challenges in our efforts to eliminate and further prevent violence against women, including sexual violence: first, insufficient gender-sensitive policies; secondly, inadequate implementation of legal and policy frameworks; thirdly, inadequate data collection, analysis and research; fourthly, the lack of financial and human resources and insufficient allocation of such resources; and, fifthly, the lack of comprehensive, consistent, sustained, transparent and adequately monitored and evaluated efforts.

Those gaps have yet to be bridged by States as the bearers of the primary responsibility in addressing the issue of violence against women and its impact, in order to translate commitments into practical approaches and actions on the ground, to fashion more compassionate responses for victims, to pursue more aggressive prosecutions of perpetrators and to create more secure communities and environments.

With its multifold economic, social and cultural consequences, sexual violence in conflict hampers not only women and men victims, but also their families and communities. Therefore, Indonesia supports the six-point priority agenda established by the former and current Special Representatives of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

To conclude, Indonesia would like to reiterate the importance of the international community, including the United Nations, as the key stakeholder, joining hands and providing support for States to address the remaining gaps and tackle the gravity of the situation. Indonesia also urges all parties to conflict to comply with international humanitarian and human rights law.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Kyaw Tin (Myanmar): At the outset, my delegation wishes to express our appreciation to the Rwandan presidency for organizing this open debate on the important issue of women and peace and security.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Viet Nam on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

We also thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zainab Hawa Bangura, and the representative of the NGO Working Group on

Women, Peace and Security, Ms. Kelta Diakité, for their informative briefings this morning.

My delegation takes the floor to add its voice in condemning all form of violence against women and girls in armed conflicts. Since the adoption of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000), 13 years ago, there has been a growing recognition that gender equality plays an integral part in advancing development and peace and security, and that women can make valuable contributions to conflict resolution and in rebuilding their communities.

This year's report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149) not only highlights several concerns on violence against women, but also refers to the practice of forced marriage by certain armed forces and to the links between sexual violence and the illicit extraction of natural resources.

We thank the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for its consultations with our Mission in the process of preparing the annual report. However, my delegation regrets that the report still refers to our country, along with parties to armed conflict credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for such acts of violence, although Myanmar is making substantial progress in national reconciliation and bringing an end to conflicts with virtually all ethnic armed groups. The report does, however, acknowledge the fact that the allegations that have been received have not been independently verified due to limited access.

Armed conflicts could naturally breed violence, especially against vulnerable groups. At the same time, such situations could also be exploited to make up or inflate stories of violence by either side of a conflict for its own agenda. Objectivity and accuracy are of the utmost importance in the reporting exercise, especially when dealing with sensitive issues. A few isolated incidents committed by certain individuals cannot always be construed as the policy of a certain Government or institution. The most important issue in this connection is to have proper legal action taken against any perpetrator.

Women in Myanmar are protected by culture, religion and laws. Myanmar's tradition and culture, which abhor the sexual exploitation of women, strongly contribute to our national efforts to promote gender equality and to reduce sexual violence against women and girls. Gender-based violence is being addressed through legal action against all perpetrators, regardless of whoever commits the crime. Members of the armed forces have to observe not only the penal code but also the military's code of conduct. We fully support a zero-tolerance policy with regard to violence against women and girls.

The best way to ensure the protection of women and children in armed conflicts is to put a speedy end to such conflicts. The new Government has made unprecedented strides in its efforts at national reconciliation, resulting in establishing ceasefire agreements with all but one ethnic group. Peace talks with the remaining group are also gaining momentum. We are confident that lasting peace will soon prevail in every corner of our country. Such developments will do away with the alleged violence against women in the dwindling areas of conflict.

As Myanmar moves towards to an open society, the press and media are enjoying greater freedom. The newfound media freedom is helping our efforts in addressing violence against women through independent monitoring and reporting. In addition, a complaint mechanism to report such abuses is also being put in place by our national human rights commission. As a member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Myanmar is also implementing a 10-year national strategic plan for the advancement of women and is in the process of drafting a law on violence against women.

I would like to voice our support for the Secretary-General's assertion that Members States bear the primary legal and moral responsibility for preventing and addressing conflict-related violence. My delegation would like to conclude by reaffirming its commitment to enhance its efforts for the prevention and elimination of violence against women in conflict areas through strong legal action and national reconciliation.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Bernardini (Italy): Allow me to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate of the Security Council and by complimenting the Secretary-General, his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security on their important statements. I also wish to assure the Special Representative of the Italian Government's full support for the fulfillment of her mandate.

Italy aligns itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security. I wish to make the following remarks in a national capacity.

The Secretary-General's report on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149) gives us a comprehensive picture of a daunting challenge for the international community. In far too many conflict-related situations, women, men and children are not protected from such international crimes. We are particularly concerned about the serious human rights violations in northern Mali, including rape; the heightened risk of rape for refugees and internally displaced persons; the perpetration of rape and sexual violence in detention centres in Syria; and the alarming number of incidents of sexual violence in Somalia. We also note with concern emerging trends such as the perpetration of sexual violence against men and boys, the plight of children born as a result of a rape, and the practice of forced marriages by armed groups.

There are key early-warning and conflict-prevention tools that the international community can use to prevent such heinous acts. For example, timely briefings to the Security Council by the Secretary-General's Special Representative and by UN-Women; the roll-out of United Nations system monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements; and the inclusion of women's protection advisers in peacekeeping missions and political missions.

At the same time, we need a powerful response. Again, the Security Council needs to step up pressure on perpetrators of sexual violence in armed conflicts through the adoption of targeted measures by the relevant Sanctions Committees. When there is no ad hoc committee, the Council should close any protection or impunity gaps. The Council should incorporate measures on sexual violence in all the relevant country resolutions and in the authorization and renewal of the mandates of peacekeeping and special political missions.

The commitments of the parties to a conflict should be monitored and followed up, and a zero-tolerance policy should be taken towards sexual misconduct by peacekeeping, political and peacebuilding personnel.

International justice has placed a welcome emphasis on combating sexual violence as a complement to national efforts, in particular under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Comprehensive justice strategies are essential, including accountability and reparation, following a victim-centered approach. The Security Council should also contribute to ensuring that there no safe havens for the perpetrators of sexual violence in armed conflict.

Cooperation with civil society organizations, particularly women-led civil society organizations, should accompany those actions. Governments must ensure the protection of women's human rights defenders, who face particular risks in conflict situations.

In March, the Commission on the Status of Women approved agreed conclusions with a strong condemnation of all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence. The Arms Trade Treaty, adopted by the General Assembly just this month, obliges States parties to take into account the risk of conventional arms being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence. The Group of Eight made a strong commitment to addressing impunity and preventing sexual violence in conflict. Italy has always supported all such commitments, which must now be followed by concrete actions.

As a supporter of the landmark resolution 1820 (2009), Italy is convinced of the evident connection between ending sexual violence and promoting peace and security. That is why the Italian national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) includes specific provisions to address sexual violence in conflict. The 2013 Italian development cooperation strategy includes capacity-building activities and the provision of assistance to survivors in Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon, Libya, Palestine, the Sudan and Syria. The Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units, the Vicenza-based training centre, created by the Italian Government in 2005, systematically includes the prevention of sexual violence in their courses for peacekeepers.

Let me conclude by urging everyone not to forget that the primary responsibility for addressing sexual violence still lies with States, as the Secretary-General indicated in his call for national ownership and leadership. As responsible Governments, we owe that to the survivors of sexual violence and to the families of victims. Italy stands ready to assist and support such efforts.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile thanks the Rwandan presidency for having convened this important open debate on women, peace and security focused on the issue of sexual violence in armed conflict.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, as well as that delivered by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the Human Security Network.

We also welcome the report of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in armed conflict (S/2013/149), in particular with regard to the actions taken and challenges faced by States in protecting women, men and children from sexual violence in the context of conflict and post-conflict situations.

We underscore the role of the Security Council when it comes to women, peace and security through the adoption of resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010) and 2086 (2013).

We welcome the work of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Situations, Ms. Bangura, whom we assure of our full cooperation.

Chile is firmly committed to the fight against violence against women and girls, which we view as an atrocious crime that must be addressed in a comprehensive way. Violence, in all forms, goes against human rights and, as such, addressing it must be priority for States, and not an optional extra.

The policy of Chile in this area has been strengthened through our participation in a number of international instruments that have allowed us to consolidate our democratic principles and make progress in this direction. In August 2009, Chile published its national action plan pursuant to resolution 1325 (2000), which it structured around the gender perspective, human rights, participation and coordination. This year, Chile will begin updating the plan in line with the guidelines set out by the United Nations so as to incorporate dissemination, follow-up and awareness-raising mechanisms on gender and security. We aim to achieve the comprehensive and cross-cutting implementation of actions seeking to promote targets for peace and women's participation and leadership in the planning, coordination and implementation of prevention processes in conflict and post-conflict situations.

In that context, we have promoted the inclusion of the gender perspective and leadership functions in the context of our armed forces. There has also been an increasing awareness of gender among the armed forces and the equitable participation of women in peacebuilding and decision-making processes, as well as in international security.

We have achieved that goal with the active participation of a number of national bodies. In March, Chile organized a parallel event devoted to this topic in the context of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, entitled "Chile global network of women peacebuilders: implementation of the women, peace and security agenda — experiences from Latin America". As part of that event, the Deputy Minister of the National Service for Women of Chile, Ms. Viviana Paredes, reaffirmed Chile's commitment to the Security Council resolutions on this issue and to the national action plan and its adaptation to the new requirements that my country has proposed.

We believe it is equally important to continue to promote the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in our region through the exchange of experiences and international cooperation, both at the bilateral level and in the regional mechanisms for peacekeeping operations of which Chile is a part. That is the case with the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, for which Chile has provided female military contingents and in which it has followed the United Nations zero-tolerance policy for the sexual abuse and misconduct cases in which certain members of the Mission have been involved. We believe that the zero-tolerance policy should be a general standard that is strictly and zealously enforced in all peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations.

A key element in making progress on these issues has been the guidelines established in the Security Council resolutions that followed historic resolution 1325 (2000), which reinforce its principles and the undeniable progress that has been made on the issue of gender-based violence within the United Nations system. In that respect, it is worth highlighting the conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-seventh session. We promoted the inclusion, in those conclusions, of the relationship between the trafficking and illicit use of small arms and light weapons and the resurgence of violence against women and children, as we did in the text of the Arms Trade Treaty, which also deals with this issue.

We agree with the Secretary-General when he states in his report that national tribunals continue to bear the primary responsibilty for the fight against impunity for cases of sexual violence and are an important complement to the efforts of the International Criminal Court, fundamentally in terms of restoring victims' dignity and holding perpetrators legally accountable.

One of the founding principles of Chile's foreign policy is the promotion of fundamental and universal human rights. In that respect, we will continue to support the efforts aimed at preventing violence against women in conflict and promoting mediation in conflict situations. We will continue to advocate for women's inclusion and participation in efforts at peacekeeping, peacebuilding and mediation.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Lithuania.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): The progress achieved in addressing the issue of sexual violence in conflict since the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda placed sexual aggression on the agenda of post-conflict justice is undeniable. The relevant Security Council resolutions have created an extensive toolkit for tackling conflict-related sexual violence.

As horrendous assault on individual bodies and human dignity, sexual violence in conflict goes far beyond common banditry and has been repeatedly used in the imposition of wider political agendas, the destruction of opponents, ethnic cleansing, forced displacement and clearing of access to resources and territory.

My delegation therefore congratulates the Rwandan presidency of the Security Council for holding this important debate. We welcome the recommendations by the Secretary-General contained in his most recent report (S/2013/149). We also commend the work and personal dedication of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura.

Speaking elsewhere earlier this year, Ms. Bangura insisted that sexual violence as a tactic of war was as effective as any bomb and as destructive as any mine, and that it needed to be addressed with the same determination as any other deadly weapon used in war. Indeed, we cannot stem conflict-related sexual aggression unless we are determined to prevent, protect and prosecute. For as long as the perpetrators know they can get away with it, that barbaric tactic of warfare will continue, with inevitable peace and security implications.

While we associate ourselves with the statement made by the observer of the European Union, I shall limit myself to the following points at this stage.

When it comes to conflict-related sexual crimes, my delegation urges the Security Council to use the full range of means at its disposal to tackle impunity, including systematic referrals to the International Criminal Court, mandating commissions of inquiry and explicitly and vocally condemning such crimes.

Lithuania supports the full implementation of the provisions of resolution 1960 (2010) on rape and other forms of sexual violence as designation criteria when adopting or renewing targeted sanctions in situations of armed conflict. We expect such criteria to be consistently applied in sanctioning entities and individuals identified in the Secretary-General's reports and those named by the Special Representative.

My delegation would welcome enhanced interaction between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the relevant Security Council Sanctions Committees and expert groups, as well as between the Special Representative and the Council as a whole. Furthermore, we call for the inclusion of provisions regarding conflict-related sexual violence in all the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions.

Tackling impunity is hard to imagine without a robust monitoring and reporting system. That may be easier said than done, however, especially where technical capacities are inadequate or where a critical lack of confidence in transitional justice create serious impediments. If the perpetrators of sexual violence are free to return and establish themselves among those they have abused, victims will continue to live in fear and countless abuses will remain unreported. Developing the requisite capabilities and restoring victims' trust in justice are essential for the purposes of prevention and deterrence. Providing better support for victims, including through women's protection advisers, reparation mechanisms and women's systematic inclusion in all aspects of conflict resolution, post-conflict reconciliation and transitional justice, is key to restoring victims' trust and ensuring that crimes will not go unpunished.

The Council and individual Member States have an important role to play in those matters. My delegation welcomes the recent declaration by the Group of Eight, including the provisions on improved investigation and documentation of sexual violence in conflict. The Council in particular should see to it that security sector reforms and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes are fully responsive to the sensitivities arising from conflict-related sexual violence and provide rigorous vetting and training of national security institutions. We welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation that blanket amnesties should not be applied where conflict-related sexual violence is in question.

With respect to a zero-tolerance policy, my delegation firmly supports the inclusion of provisions on a zero-tolerance policy vis-à-vis sexual misconduct by United Nations personnel in all the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding missions. For the time being, that is not the case, and we hope that the gap will be redressed as mandates are renewed.

On a broader scale, however, we as the international community should be using all means and opportunities available for stemming sexual violence as a tool of war. The combined power of women's full participation; consistent support and protection to victims, human rights defenders, activists and journalists who expose the crimes; education and global awareness-raising campaigns; and the personal engagement of world leaders, spiritual authorities and community leaders are essential in fostering a global zero-tolerance environment for those heinous crimes. We expect no less from the Council, as the most authoritative body on peace and security matters, but to take the lead in raising the stakes for all those who think they can engage, unchallenged, in rape or sexual abuse to a prohibitive degree.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kyrgyzstan.

Mr. Kydyrov (Kyrgyzstan): At the outset, I would like to thank the Rwandan presidency of the Security Council for organizing this timely and important debate.

Kyrgyzstan welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (S/2012/732), which contains a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the progress achieved over the past year. My delegation also welcomes his report on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149) and supports the recommendations contained therein. However, we believe that current situations in the Middle East and in some countries in the African region require further consolidated efforts by Member States and by global and regional security structures.

Kyrgyzstan believes it is necessary to take additional measures to effectively address impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict and to ensure the equal participation of women in mediation, humanitarian assistance and post-conflict recovery processes.

We support the recommendation of the Secretary-General on increased attention to women's empowerment in terms of developing policies and strategies with regard to peacebuilding and in considering the renewal of the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping missions.

Kyrgyzstan welcomes the efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in preventing violence against women in armed conflict. In that respect, important measures aim to strengthen the operational capacity of the United Nations, including through the United Nations International Network of Female Police Peacekeepers, established for those taking part in peacekeeping operations.

Kyrgyzstan appreciates the efforts of UN-Women to ensure gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system. We underline the importance of the outcome of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in March, which considered in detail the problems of preventing and eliminating all forms of violence against women.

In the current difficult circumstances, my delegation continues to call on UN-Women to strengthen cooperation with other agencies in providing support to Member States in the preparation and implementation of national plans to implement Security Council resolutions on preventing violence against women and enhancing their role in ensuring peace and security.

Kyrgyzstan attaches the greatest importance to the participation of women in political and peacebuilding processes and takes concrete measures to maintain peace and stability in our country and in the region as a whole.

In order to effectively implement the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000), on 18 February, the Government approved its national plan of action. The plan provides for a set of measures aimed at establishing an institutional system on the protection of women's rights and creating favourable conditions for increasing women's role and participation in efforts towards peace, security and conflict prevention.

In addition, on 10 April, the President of the Kyrgyz Republic approved a concept on strengthening the unity of the people and inter-ethnic relations in the Kyrgyz Republic, which will undoubtedly contribute to strengthening peace, stability and post-conflict reconstruction.

The role of the Peacebuilding Fund is of great importance. The Fund has supported Kyrgyzstan in its implementation of national reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction projects. Today, projects aimed at completing that process are being planned.

We would also like to note the activities of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and United Nations agencies, in promoting conflict prevention initiatives and strengthened inter-ethnic harmony.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm Kyrgyzstan's commitment to further contribute to United Nations efforts in ensuring women's rights and eradicating conflict-related violence.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Seruhere (United Republic of Tanzania): We welcome this open debate of the Security Council on women and peace and security. We thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and for his annual report entitled "Sexual violence in conflict" (S/2013/149).

We also thank Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for her presentation, as well as Ms. Saran Keïta Diakité.

The international community has made considerable strides since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). Through it and subsequent resolutions adopted by this body, the international community has committed itself to ending the pain and distress affecting women and girls who are subjected to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

It is a matter of concern that, despite our determined efforts, women and girls continue to suffer from the abhorrent crimes perpetrated by armed groups and by national authorities whose duty is to shield civilians from harm.

Instead of diminishing, conflict-related sexual violence is on the rise, and it increasingly involves men and boys as perpetrators employ sexual violence as a tactic of war and as a punishment and interrogation technique.

Impunity of that nature is a great challenge to our collective resolve. It is in clear contempt of the values we have committed to uphold. We must do more at national, regional and international levels to end impunity, by demonstrating to perpetrators that such crimes will not go unpunished.

Perpetrators of sexual-based violence must be prosecuted and tried by competent national courts or tribunals. Where that is not feasible — as is often the case in conflict and most post-conflict situations — the States concerned should be willing to surrender suspects to international criminal courts and tribunals to face trial.

The international criminal justice system, despite its shortcomings, has had its merits, including offering an elaboration of sexual violence as capable of constituting a crime against humanity, a war crime and an act of genocide. The indictment of leaders of armed groups by the International Criminal Court (ICC) — such as those of Joseph Kony, Bosco Ntaganda, Sylvestre Mudacumura and others — is a step towards ending impunity, however moderate it is.

We encourage supporting and strengthening the ICC, with the view to broadening its reach and acceptability, for it has been of immense value to the international community. Needless to say, it is the only international criminal justice mechanism that we have at our disposal for fighting pervasive impunity. It deserves to be commended, not to be maligned.

While prosecution is critical in ending impunity, we must also continue to address its root causes. We must resolve conflicts by reconciling warring parties and encouraging dialogue, rather than by employing military solutions. If necessary, negative forces must be neutralized, demobilized and reintegrated into society.

The reconstruction of post-conflict countries must be undertaken in an inclusive manner so that the process is owned by all parties to a conflict. We have witnessed the consequences of excluding some armed groups from disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform programmes.

We must do more to empower women and girls to participate in peace and security processes, as well as decision-making roles in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. We are encouraged by the increasing number of female military and police peacekeepers. The United Republic of Tanzania contributes more than 200 such courageous women to such missions. It is our goal to contribute more in the future, in the spirit of resolution 1325 (2000).

We must find effective ways to respond to the needs of the survivors of sexual violence. The United Nations Action multi-partner trust fund is pivotal in that regard. We encourage Member States and other partners to contribute to the fund.

Let me conclude by underscoring the unswerving commitment of the United Republic of Tanzania to ending violence against women, men and children wherever and by whosoever committed. We renew our commitment to the regional and international instruments to which we are parties in order to achieve that noble objective. We will continue to support the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

Ms. Anderson (Ireland): Conflict-related sexual violence is an issue that, in recent years, has continued to rise on the international agenda. Such attention has been driven by several factors, including the sustained leadership shown by the Council; the work of the Secretary-General and the authoritative and passionate voice of his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict; and the efforts of Member States and those of civil society organizations, which do so much to amplify the voices of marginalized women and men.

Last week's forthright Group of Eight declaration is clear evidence of how high-profile the issue has become. I would like to commend the United Kingdom on the leadership that it has demonstrated with its Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative. We look forward to that momentum being maintained with a further Security Council debate in June.

Such high-profile action and momentum — and even more of both — are desperately needed. The recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149) sets out the brutal realities facing women in conflict situations today. It does not shirk from going into exhaustive and difficult detail. That includes the 1,700 rape cases registered in and around Mogadishu last year, almost one third of which involved child victims; the use of sexual violence in Syria during house searches, at checkpoints and in detention; and the scale, savagery and systematic nature of conflict-related sexual violence in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Despite its range and specificity, the Secretary-General's report is far from comprehensive. As the report points out, sexual violence is almost universally underreported. The information it presents is therefore only indicative of the scope and character of sexual violence being committed against women, children and men.

The report needs to be updated almost as soon as it is written. As an example, the latest information reaching us about the Central African Republic suggests a situation out of control, with sexual violence employed on all sides as an instrument of conflict.

Faced with such horrors, how can we translate the concern voiced around this table into meaningful action on the ground? I would like to focus on just three points, following on from the European Union statement and from the statement by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, both of which Ireland has aligned itself with.

The first issue relates to ending impunity, which is absolutely critical to ensuring both accountability and effective deterrence. That requires a multi-pronged approach: building national capacity to investigate and prosecute acts of sexual violence; further steps to ensure that international criminal justice deals with sexual violence in a more systematic and consistent manner; and further consideration of how the Security Council can act more effectively in applying targeted sanctions.

The steps already taken by the Security Council in relation to targeted sanctions are welcome and significant, but there is more to be done. As the non-profit organization Security Council Report identified in its recent cross-cutting report, political caution in the Council has precluded a more ambitious use of sanctions in the women, peace and security context. To achieve more traction and to deliver more results, the Council needs to be more consistent and comprehensive in its approach.

One of the core recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report is that all the Security Council Sanctions Committees include a focus on crimes of sexual violence and that the Council expand its institutional capacity so as to develop ways to apply sanctions where no such committees are in place. Ireland strongly endorses that recommendation, and we hope at our next open debate, in June, to hear of progress being made towards its fulfilment.

The second issue concerns the deployment of women's protection advisers. One particular innovation that has made a real difference and has had a catalytic impact on the ground is the deployment of more women's protection advisers to missions. I reiterate the call by the Group of Friends for the necessary and specific budgetary resources to be identified to ensure that women's protection advisers are deployed where they are needed in all the relevant Security Council-mandated missions.

The third issue is the focus on participation. A defining feature of the resolution 1325 (2000) agenda is that it goes beyond protection to embrace empowerment.

There is an inextricable connection between women's treatment in peacetime and their treatment in conflict. As Special Representative Bangura put it recently:

> "If women are seen as second-class citizens in peacetime, their rights will not be respected when there is unrest. If they are viewed as unimportant before war breaks out, they will be treated as expendable during conflict".

Empowerment cannot and will not happen without women's participation. Promoting participation is a challenge that is shared right across the United Nations system, but the Security Council clearly has responsibilities within its remit. The detailed and independent Security Council Report to which I referred earlier gives cause for concern in that regard. While acknowledging progress on other aspects of the resolution 1325 (2000) agenda, it finds that:

> "There are worrying indications that the Council's focus is less sharp when it comes to the women's participation aspect".

That imbalance needs to be addressed. The Security Council should factor women's participation into all its deliberations and decisions in a systematic way. Such a focus is essential if we are to move beyond symptoms and to address root causes.

Finally, let me briefly update the Council on developments in Ireland. We are currently undertaking an independent review of our resolution 1325 (2000) national action plan and, in the interests of transparency and sharing lessons learned, we intend to make public the main lessons identified as part of that process. I would also like to note that the Irish Defence Forces are breaking new ground in producing their own resolution 1325 (2000) action plan so as to ensure that the objectives for which they bear responsibility are delivered.

As we know, sexual violence in conflict is vicious and pitiless, and there is no sign of it abating. Rather, the roll call of shame continues to grow ever longer. Insofar as today's debate strengthens our resolve and brings us closer to achieving a real and life-changing impact on the ground, it will indeed be worthwhile.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Fiji.

Mr. Thomson (Fiji): Allow me, first, to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate, which provides an opportunity for all members to contribute to the discussion on the global women and peace and security agenda. Allow me also to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/149), which provides a clear articulation of the current and emerging concerns regarding sexual violence as it pertains to international peace and security.

The past debates of the Council on women and peace and security in which Fiji has participated have focused on the broader implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The current report of the Secretary-General focuses on sexual violence in conflict, bringing into sharper focus the work needed for the implementation of the subsequent resolutions, in particular resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010).

Fiji is committed to the elimination of sexual violence and to working both domestically and with the international community to do so. At the national level, Fiji's Ministry of Women has revived the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Elimination of Violence against Women to coordinate policy responses across all Government agencies. It is working with the Fiji police force to implement the law introduced in the last few years that, among other things, introduced marital rape as a specific offence under the criminal code, and also introduced a child-welfare code requiring teachers, doctors and other professionals to report suspected child-abuse cases. The Ministry also champions a campaign on zero tolerance of violence against women and children, which operates at the community level in partnership with community leaders, the police force and non-governmental organizations.

At the international level, Fiji's commitment to eliminating sexual violence is expressed primarily through its peacekeeping efforts. Fiji sends police peacekeepers to missions where the mandate includes capacity-building of local security institutions. In post-conflict situations, our experience has been that a large part of that capacity- building is to assist local security institutions in responding to cases of sexual violence, from initial contact with victims through victim counseling through to the finality of police involvement in such cases. Beyond this, community policing and assisting local police institutions in awareness-raising and preventative policing has also formed part of Fiji's contribution.

Eliminating sexual violence is crucial, because only in the absence of sexual and other forms of violence will the empowerment of women be possible so as to achieve gender equality. Women in our communities are change-makers and core to the functioning of our communities. They are first responders in moments of crisis, including in responding to natural disasters and in adapting the approach of communities to new challenges such as those posed by climate change. Our societies are only as strong as the weakest among us. If we are to address emerging security and developmental challenges, we have to ensure that those most at risk of marginalization, including at-risk women and children, are freed from the risk of violence and fully empowered to contribute.

Accordingly, I would like to conclude by restating Fiji's steadfast commitment to working with the international community to implement resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Elbahi (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this open debate in order to consider the issue of women and peace and security, which is one of the permanent items on our agenda. I should like also to thank the Secretary-General and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bangura.

Aware of the need to highlight the role of women in peacetime, my Government has established a policy aimed at empowering women that is based on the following pillars: the environment, health, education, economic development, participation in decision-making processes, the settlement of disputes, and peace and human rights. A plan of action has been implemented with a view to implementing that policy. In addition, a number of administrative units responsible for women's affairs have been set up. Gender-specific measures have been promoted across all departments and ministries, including in the provinces, in order to establish plans of actions and strategies aimed at empowering women and strengthening their participation at all levels.

Projects have also been set up for the economic empowerment of women through the establishment of a women's portfolio, a revolving fund for women for the purpose of savings and economic development, and small-business projects that benefit women, set up by the Zakat department. I would also cite a project involving young graduates, the establishment of a group for working women, and other family-oriented undertakings. Empowerment programmes are focusing on rural women, particularly in Darfur, Kordofan and Blue Nile.

We have made considerable progress in terms of empowering women and strengthening their participation. For example, laws were enacted on equality of salary and retirement age. The electoral law of 2008 increased women's participation in Parliament; representation is now at 27 per cent. Women have been able to run for office and vote since laws to that effect were enacted in the 1950s and 1960s.

Women were included on the list of candidates for the presidential election. The participation of women in the public sector has increased significantly. In the Parliament, the rate is 28 per cent; in the private sector, 54 per cent; and in terms of economic production, 87.8 per cent. The Justice Department includes

80 women judges, and there are 50 women diplomats, including ambassadors and heads of missions to other countries. Women can join the security and armed forces and have reached grades as high as brigadier. They participate fully in the private sector and have made great strides in the public sector.

My Government has promoted such policies throughout all of the Sudanese provinces and regions, focusing on Darfur in particular. The projects are aimed at meeting the concerns of rural women first and foremost and include the financing of micro-projects aimed at alleviating poverty, training and capacity-building programmes, and awareness-raising programmes on health and nutrition, women's rights, education and peace education. The project allocates 30 per cent of its funding to small and medium-sized enterprises.

Furthermore, my Government has undertaken various projects at the central Government and regional levels. Those projects depend on the specific requirements of the area and are aimed at strengthening women's participation in peacetime.

A national strategy to eliminate violence against women was put in place in 2005. A unit on violence against women and children has also been set up. Special law-enforcement agencies have been established to protect women and children, and women's rights are also protected within the army.

Genital mutilation was eliminated in 2008, and the criminal justice system has introduced provisions relating to war crimes so as to protect women from all forms of violence in Darfur; that was done in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund and the human rights office in the Sudan. We have also strengthened the World Health Organization protocol on the protection of victims of rape, making it possible to file a complaint and receive reparations. In 2010, a law criminalizing child abuse was enacted.

In that context, I would like to underscore that the Sudan's framework cooperation agreement with South Sudan will have a positive impact in promoting cooperation and assisting women in both countries, in addition to eliminating sexual violence in conflict. We should note that our disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes have, in coordination with specialized agencies of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme and UN-Women, given top priority to women. The aim is to implement a work plan pursuant to resolution 1325 (2000).

The solution to women's problems in times of armed conflict is inextricably linked to the efforts to analyse the root causes of conflicts, such as poverty, lack of development and climate change, and to find solutions to them. Measures adopted by the Security Council must be based on reports of the Secretary-General grounded in accurate information received from reporting countries, not on reports from certain non-governmental organizations or the media.

We hope that the discussions in the Council will lead to the establishment of a system to examine all women's issues. In that context, I would like to underscore the importance of dialogue with countries concerned in order to analyse and find appropriate solutions to this very difficult topic.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): At the outset, I would like to thank Rwanda for organizing today's very important open debate. My thanks also go to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for their insightful briefings,

Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of European Union, as well as the statement by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

Although the Security Council has clearly stipulated in the relevant resolutions that sexual violence in conflict is a serious threat to peace and security, it remains a neglected and under-reported crime. The recent annual report of the Secretary General (S/2013/149) has brought to light some very disturbing findings. It shows that sexual violence is used in many conflicts as a weapon of war by armed groups and, in some cases, even by the armed forces. More than 30 parties from five countries are credibly suspected of committing or condoning sexual violence in conflict. And those are only parties in countries on the Council's agenda and on which the United Nations had verified information; the actual figures are undoubtedly much higher. Especially alarming is the fact that many of the victims are children. Therefore, the ultimate goal of our discussion here today must be to find new and better ways to address that abhorrent crime.

The report before us contains some very good recommendations in that regard. Let me mention four points of particular importance to us.

First, we welcome the work of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and hope it will continue to work closely with other United Nations mechanisms to guarantee the best possible concerted actions in the fight against sexual violence. We also welcome the dedicated work of Special Representative Bangura and the fact that she was able to brief the Council several times in the past months, including on the situations in Syria and the Central African Republic. However, the Council should make more use of the information received and do more to act and hold perpetrators accountable. It could, for example, release corresponding press statements, write specific letters to the Governments concerned and more often refer specific cases to the Sanctions Committees and, as a last resort, to the International Criminal Court.

Secondly, the Council should keep the issue of women and peace and security, including sexual violence, high on its agenda and make sure that all the relevant reports, mandate renewals and country visits by the Council contain specific provisions in that regard. More women's protection advisers need to be deployed, including in United Nations assessment teams and missions.

Thirdly, in security sector reform and in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, more focus should be given to the needs of women and girls, not only as victims but also with a view to their active participation in reintegration processes. In peace agreements, sexual violence shall figure in one important provision: those who have previously committed or condoned sexual violence should be excluded from amnesty provisions and should not be allowed to serve in the relevant official functions.

Fourthly, Member States and regional organizations can also do more. Sexual violence shall under no circumstances be socially accepted. It is of paramount importance to criminalize sexual violence by law, hold perpetrators accountable and provide assistance services and reparations for survivors. In that regard, we welcome the recent press statement by the African Union Peace and Security Council and its call for the development of new strategies to fight sexual violence in conflict. Also, we are confident that the recent commitments made in the Group of Eight context to address impunity for sexual violence in conflict will have a significant impact.

For my Government, confronting sexual violence is one of the priority areas in our new national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). We actively support the United Nations, Member States and civil society in their fight against sexual violence. Personnel of non-governmental organizations, human rights defenders and journalists who report about cases of sexual violence, in particular, are often at a heightened risk of being targeted themselves. They all need our support to continue their invaluable work in raising awareness and helping Governments prevent or ease the consequences of sexual violence.

Let me conclude by saying that the Council should remain seized of this important issue. It should not and cannot be separated from the broader security issues.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mr. Moura (Portugal): I would like to thank your delegation, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for their remarks.

Let me start by commending Ms. Bangura for her excellent work in recent months and for her efforts to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence. Portugal welcomes the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149), which identifies current and emerging concerns relating to sexual violence in a number of countries, such as Syria, the Central African Republic, Mali, Libya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We particularly welcome the fact that the report discloses new trends and the use of several forms of sexual violence as a tactic of war against not only women and girls but also men and boys. Other interesting elements set out in the report include the connection between sexual violence and the illicit extraction of natural resources and the connection between sexual violence and the failure of security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Moreover, the report gives a clear and comprehensive idea of the intensive follow-up and advocacy work carried out worldwide by the current and former Special Representatives to advance the fight against conflict-related sexual violence.

The Security Council has recognized that the protection of women is a critical priority for peace and security. Resolutions 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010) clearly establish the fight against sexual violence in its agenda. The Council has created the necessary tools to obtain reliable and accurate information on sexual violence: a common definition of sexual violence and common methodologies for data collection through a monitoring and reporting mechanism are now used throughout the system. Another promising tool at the disposal of Member States is the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law, and Portugal welcomes the technical cooperation that was provided at the request of national authorities in six countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

National accountability needs to be reinforced, as Member States bear the primary responsibility to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence by strengthening of the capacities of national institutions, in particular health, judicial and social systems. The action of the international community must also be reinforced. The deployment of women protection advisers in the relevant peacekeeping operations, so as to strengthen the prevention of and response to sexual violence, needs to be accelerated in order to ensure that dedicated capacity on sexual violence exists within peacekeeping and political missions. The challenges that have delayed the deployment of such advisers must be overcome. We are encouraged by arrangements that have allowed the deployment of such advisers in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, but we also note that women protection advisers are urgently needed in Mali, Syria and Libya, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General.

All of the information contained in the report is relevant for the Security Council in terms of its Charter-mandated responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The information that has already been collected by the reporting mechanism will make it possible for the Council to have access to "timely, objective, accurate and reliable information" on sexual violence in conflict. With such information, the Council will also be able to take further steps. That should be understood as a clear message to perpetrators of sexual violence that the Council is ready to apply sanctions or to use all other means at its disposal, including referrals to the International Criminal Court, against perpetrators that have been identified as having committed sexual violence in situations of armed conflict.

The Council needs to be consistent in its decisions and reinforce the message that impunity is simply not acceptable, sexual violence is simply not tolerable and there can be no genuine security without women's security.

Let me conclude my statement with a word for the survivors of sexual violence. They are at the centre of our debates. Let us not forget them and the fact that, beyond bringing perpetrators to justice, the international community also needs to afford care and reparation to women and girls and men and boys that have been victims of sexual violence in conflict-related situations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): I thank the Secretary-General and Special Representative Bangura for their statements. I will deliver an abridged version of my statement in the interests of time; the full text will be distributed in the Chamber.

New Zealand congratulates Rwanda, in particular its Minister for Foreign Affairs, who was with us today, for taking the lead on this very important issue in the Council. Rwanda is following in a proud tradition of several African countries that, during their presidencies, have been willing to stand up in the Council and highlight those problems, even though there are some, as we know, who would prefer that the Council spent its time on other matters.

It is important that, yet again, Rwanda is demonstrating African leadership on an African problem. We also join Portugal in the message that it sent to the victims of sexual violence. We think that that should be a message sent by the whole of the international community.

The issue of sexual violence in conflict is a global problem, and in recent years its gravity has been demonstrated, in many cases, in Africa, most recently in places not far from Rwanda. Sexual violence in conflict is as complex as it is horrifying. Its occurrence does not necessarily correspond with the intensity of the related armed violence: in low-intensity conflicts and post-conflict situations, women and children can be at as great a risk of sexual violence as during the height of hostilities. That complexity requires that the Council carefully craft its responses in addressing and focusing on sexual violence in conflict.

In that connection, we are all the more pleased to note from the assessment in the Security Council Report cross-cutting report entitled *Women, Peace and Security: Violence in Conflict and Sanctions* that, despite ongoing controversy at the thematic level, the Council has, in country-specific situations, continued to apply the substance of the principles that it had previously developed on women and peace and security. That is good news.

Even better news is the assessment that there seems to be an emerging trend, when new problems emerge, as recently they did in Mali and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to have explicit women peace and security language incorporated into mandates at the outset of a mission. We urge that that trend continue. Looking ahead, there is still great scope for improvement in the Council's work in particular cases, as is well illustrated by the experience in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where many women and children have suffered serious sexual violence.

Sanctions can, in appropriate cases, play an important role in combating sexual violence. The recent actions of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with regard to listing entities responsible for sexual violence and explicitly linking the listing to sexual violence, is an important signal that carefully crafted and targeted sanctions will be used to combat the most serious and systematic incidents of sexual violence in conflict. The Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and the Mouvement du 23 mars have now been listed by the Committee, and that sends a very important signal. However, the Council should ensure that the criteria for listing are regularly updated and harmonized across the various regimes.

The Council should move to implement the Secretary-General's recommendation that similar powers be given to the Committees responsible for Somalia, the Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire and Al-Qaida in Islamic Maghreb. It would be a useful step to add Guinea-Bissau to that list as well.

The deployment of peacekeepers with an explicit mandate to protect civilians from sexual violence has been a very important step. But the challenge is to ensure that such deployment delivers results effectively in the field. Peacekeepers must be supported with appropriate training and resources to enable them to fulfil their protection mandate. We note, for example, that the Intervention Brigade in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is specifically mandated, in resolution 2098 (2013), to contribute to civilian security, which necessarily includes protection from sexual violence.

We ask that MONUSCO's intervention operations be carefully monitored by the Council. Combat operations are inherently risky for civilian populations, no matter how principled the motivation, whether Blue Helmet or not. We must remember the recent reports in the Kivus about retreating troops committing extensive acts of rape and sexual violence. It is clear that, all too often in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, instability resulting from the use of force has helped create a climate that leads to sexual violence. Too often in the past, the Security Council has been caught off balance by outrages against civilians. The experience in the Democratic Republic of the Congo shows that the Council should, and can, find better ways to maintain appropriate engagement so as to enable the proper management of those risks. The host country, regional actors, regional and subregional organizations and troop-contributing countries must all be involved to ensure the best outcome in protecting civilian populations and reducing the incidence of sexual violence.

Just as many Member States have assiduously addressed sexual violence in their domestic environments, so, too, must the international community be equally resolved to make good on its commitment to protect populations from that all-too-prevalent scourge. It can do that through the actions and decisions — and with the support — of the Council.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

Mr. Laram (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on your presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would like to thank Rwanda, and in particular its Minister for Foreign Affairs, for convening this meeting, which is an opportunity to examine the measures taken by the Security Council to promote the participation of women in the resolution of conflicts. I would like to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict for their important statements and for participating in this meeting.

The State of Qatar understands that, as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149), there are still obstacles to women's participation and representation in decision-making, peace and transitional processes and that all regional and international bodies should support international standards to enhance women's participation in the protection of women's and girls' human rights, as well as in efforts at establishing peace.

With respect to enhancing the role of women, the State of Qatar has taken a special interest in the participation of women in the political field through many initiatives aimed at enabling women to play their full role in various areas, including the political and economic fields. Women have been appointed to important positions, including as ministers. The wife of the Amir of Qatar has supported educational, research and development programmes. The State of Qatar has adopted a preventive policy so as to protect human rights, in particular the rights of women. That was reflected in our 2013 plan, which states that women have a very important role to play in our society, particularly by participating in decision-making processes, especially in the economic and social fields.

We cannot talk about women and peace and security without dealing with the root causes of the problem. The protection of women is therefore not just a humanitarian issue but also an one that guides our efforts in many fields, especially in the application of rules for the protection of women in times of conflict without discrimination or selectivity. We must call on all parties to conflicts to take special measures to protect women and girls from sexual violence in conflict.

It is troubling that, even as we are holding this meeting, many women and girls in various parts of the world, including in the Arab world, are being subjected to forms of violence that lead to their killing and to the displacement of millions of people, especially women and children, who are more vulnerable and therefore more affected by such situations. They are exposed in particular to sexual violence and to psychological and physical violence. Women and girls are exposed to the worst kinds of violence resulting from conflict in our region, and they bear the brunt of that violence. In the Arab region, women in Palestine suffer from the unjust measures taken by the Israeli occupiers. Women in the Syrian Arab Republic are exposed to discrimination and to psychological and sexual violence, detention and imprisonment. Those acts are crimes against humanity and war crimes. The conflict in Syria has forced women and girls to flee from cities because of a lack of security and a lack of humanitarian access to those women and girls. That was reiterated in the report of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict.

In conclusion, the continued attention by the international community to the role of women in peace and security and the enhancement of the role of women in decision-making processes will have positive effects on international peace and security and will mitigate the catastrophic results of conflicts all over the world.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Ms. Frankinet (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I thank Rwanda for having organized this extremely important Security Council debate. I also thank the Secretary-General for his report on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149). And I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for her very timely and informative statement. Belgium fully supports the Special Representative's mandate and the six points of her agenda of priorities.

My country has always been a strong advocate of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, and will, of course, remain so. In his report, the Secretary-General clearly highlights how sexual violence persists in many societies as a common practice that is often invisible and too rarely prosecuted.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union. I will therefore limit my remarks to a few comments on the report of the Secretary-General.

First, my delegation stresses the need to ensure that the countries concerned themselves take ownership of and lead the fight against sexual violence. National courts must, in our view, remain the main place where people are charged with sexual-violence crimes. We should of course support those courts in pursuing the fight against impunity. Concerning crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide, international criminal justice mechanisms are an important complement to national efforts. In that context, we believe it is appropriate to apply the definition of sexual violence in the broadest sense laid out in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Secondly, my delegation is convinced that we must focus on prevention in the fight against all forms of sexual violence. That is one of the key conclusions of the most recent session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the main theme of which was the struggle against all forms of violence against women and girls.

Thirdly, I would like to thank the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict for its determined and courageous work. Belgium supports its efforts to strengthen the capacity of national actors.

Fourthly, the situations in the countries mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General are particularly worrying. I would highlight the seriousness of the situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and the Syrian Arab Republic, among others. In the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, sexual violence against women is used systematically as a weapon of war. Belgium attaches absolute priority to the fight against violence against women, both by supporting those who are doing their utmost to help victims and survivors, but also by ramping up diplomatic efforts to find a lasting solution to the crisis.

We welcome the information provided this morning by Ms. Bangura on the agreement reached with the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to strengthen efforts to combat sexual violence in conflict in that country, and our hope is that the agreement will be speedily implemented.

Fifthly, my delegation particularly supports certain recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General. On the one hand, it is necessary to increase pressure on the perpetrators of sexual violence related to conflict by adopting targeted measures against them via the various Sanctions Committees. On the other hand, we must make every effort to ensure that victims and survivors have access to all of the necessary multisectoral services and that compensation systems are set up and all means sought to effectively fight against sexual violence in conflict.

Lastly, we are strongly in favour of the mainstreaming of the fight against sexual violence in the various areas of action of the United Nations. By way of example, we welcome the fact that the text of the Arms Trade Treaty that was recently adopted includes clear references to the need to take into account the risks of violence against women and girls.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Ms. Čolaković (Bosnia and Herzegovina): I wish to thank your delegation once again, Mr. President, for having convened this important open debate. I also thank the Secretary-General; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura; and the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for their very important briefings today.

Bosnia and Herzegovina aligns itself with the statement delivered today by the observer of the European Union and welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149) on the implementation of Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security and the recommendations contained therein.

Conflict and post-conflict situations are often marked by violence and the deprivation of rights. In armed conflicts, sexual violence represents one of the most serious forms of violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The lack of progress on the issue of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, in particular against women and girls, remains of great concern for us. We condemn all forms of crimes against women and girls, and we emphasize the importance of bringing those responsible for such crimes to justice. All parties to armed conflict need to take appropriate measures to protect civilians, especially women and children, from all forms of sexual violence. It is essential to ensure that all reports of sexual violence committed by civilians or by military personnel be thoroughly investigated and the alleged perpetrators brought to justice.

Bosnia and Herzegovina attaches the utmost importance to confronting the grave issue of sexual violence and is particularly encouraged by the commitment of the Security Council to keep the matter on its agenda. That commitment was unequivocally demonstrated by the adoption of resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1894 (2009), which paved the way for concrete action aimed at preventing sexual violence. We fully support the work of the United Nations in addressing sexual violence in armed conflict, particularly that of UN-Women, and the mandates of the Secretary-General's Special Representatives on Children in Armed Conflict and on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

We underscore the responsibility of States and parties to conflict to observe and uphold their international obligations and respect international humanitarian law, which grants special protection to women and children.

Involving women in conflict prevention and mediation is therefore essential to building peace and reinforcing the foundations of democracy. Women's participation remains low in both the official and observer roles. We therefore need to intensify all our efforts to ensure women's full participation in the processes of conflict prevention and resolution, the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and early peacebuilding and post-conflict planning, as well as in enhancing women's role in decision-making processes.

Integrating a gender perspective into peacekeeping policies and the promotion of women's participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations is fundamental to a more effective performance on the ground. Recruiting women in the civil, military and police components of peacekeeping missions can encourage local women to report incidents of sexual violence and can also contribute to establishing better communication with local communities. We will spare no effort to advance on that issue. The relevant authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina have adopted a policy that one third of the nominated candidates for peacekeeping missions must be women.

We believe that countries should work on adopting national action plans or strategies in order to integrate issues related to women and peace and security, and gender issues, into their national policies and create a broader basis for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Moreover, it is also important to increase State institutions and services' knowledge and capacity in order to implement the resolution and collaborate effectively with international organizations and civil society. Here I would recall that Bosnia and Herzegovina has adopted both a national action plan for the resolution's implementation and a gender action plan. Those two documents are crucial to streamlining activities related to the women and peace and security agenda in the relevant sectors and to accelerating the resolution's implementation in our country.

With the aim of improving the overall situation of women victims of rape, the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina is finalizing the drafting of the document entitled "Programme for the victims of rape, sexual abuse and torture in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013-2016", which will seek to improve the position of all the victims. One of the goals of the programme emphasizes the obligation of the State to provide access to reparations programmes for victims of war and the need to provide legal and psychological support to victims and witnesses during and after court proceedings. The draft strategy on transitional justice has been prepared, and we are currently in the process of obtaining the opinions of all levels of Government in that respect.

Finally, we would like to point out that the international community has taken noteworthy steps, including the adoption of the relevant resolutions, to tackle the issue of sexual violence. But more importantly, the time has come to start converting commitments and promises into real actions on the ground to prevent violence, protect individuals, punish perpetrators and provide redress to victims. Bosnia and Herzegovina stands ready to contribute to those efforts.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mr. Osorio (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, first of all, to congratulate Rwanda on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Rwanda, Ms. Louise Mushikiwabo, for their presentations. This is also an opportunity to express our greeting of solidarity with Rwanda, which this month marks the nineteenth anniversary of the genocide. I also want to mention our particular recognition of the work that Ms. Bangura has been doing and of the progress in implementing the provisions of resolution 1960 (2010).

Colombia supports the work of the Security Council, which complements the results achieved on the basis of various international agreements, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Those agreements and various forums and conferences recognize and promote the human rights of women. However, we deplore the fact that situations continue to occur in different parts of the world.

With regard to the Secretary-General's report on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149), which we are considering today, I would like to recall that, in accordance to resolution 1960 (2010), information collected on sexual violence should be timely, accurate, reliable and impartial. Colombia believes that, in order for our authorities to take the appropriate preventive and corrective measures, the kind of information contained in the report must be more accurate.

We are surprised that some examples of the situation in Colombia mentioned in the report do not include sufficient information on the incidents that took place. While for Colombia it is critical to fight all forms of sexual violence against women, children and young people, we underscore that it is of great concern that the report speaks generically about increasing the pressure on perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict, including the individuals, parties and States named in the reports.

I would like to give a clear explanation here. It should be understood that, in making that call, the report of the Secretary-General is referring to the situations listed in the annex to the report, that is, those situations that are under consideration by both the Security Council and the Sanctions Committees established in connection with such situations, in accordance with the provisions of the paragraph 3 of resolution 1960 (2010). That would mean acting in accordance with the mandates set out and endeavouring to establish clear distinctions among those situations and the situations mentioned in the body of the report that are not on the Security Council's agenda.

We reiterate our position on the possible establishment of talks with State and non-State parties to obtain commitments. Such talks should always respect national laws and policies. Allow me therefore to reiterate that Colombia's policy is that any dialogue between the United Nations and illegal armed groups operating in the country can take place only with the Government's prior and explicit consent. The Colombian State attaches the greatest importance to the prevention, investigation and prosecution of sexual violence in armed conflict. It is therefore willing to address that complex problem. We have launched a number of public policies. We have taken specific steps to protect the rights of victims of sexual violence in armed conflict, such as Act No. 1257 of 2008, on the prevention and punishment of acts of violence and discrimination against women, Act No. 1146 of 2007, on the prevention of sexual violence and the comprehensive care of sexually abused children and adolescents, and Decree No. 552 of 2012, which established the intersectoral commission for the prevention of recruitment and use of children, adolescents and young people by illegal organized groups.

With regard to the justice sector and the armed forces, as the report indicates, Colombia has adopted a zero-tolerance policy. It is supplemented by a manual and protocol that serve as a guide for members of the armed forces in addressing sexual violence that may occur as a result of armed conflict. That document is widely disseminated among members of the armed forces.

As can be seen, and as the Secretary-General underscores in his report, Colombia has varying policies and guarantees that mark a breakthrough in the State's efforts to address that complex problem comprehensively and consistently. Also, work is under way, in coordination with the United Nations, the Presidential High Commissioner for Women's Equality and 22 Colombian State agencies, to outline additional preventing measures, in line with the experience in the field and international standards.

The establishment of provisions for monitoring, analysing and reporting on sexual violence in conflict situations should seek primarily, on the basis of accurate, impartial objective and verifiable information, to promote the adoption of measures to prevent sexual violence in conflict situations and to provide effective responses for the benefit of victims. In that regard, it is imperative to assist States in developing and implementing early-warning mechanisms and procedures to facilitate the reporting, collection and verification of data. To the same end, the various agencies of the United Nations must continue to strengthen coordination, decrease duplication of effort and build a coherent approach in the field in order to assist the Security Council in its consideration of appropriate measures.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Amit Kumar (India): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General, his Special

Representative Zainab Hawa Bangura and the civil society representative, Ms. Saran Keïta Diakité, for their detailed briefings.

Women bear a disproportionate brunt of armed conflict, even though in most cases they are not directly engaged in combat. Resolution 1325 (2000) provides the framework for women to play an important role in the resolution of armed conflicts through participation in peacebuilding processes and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Allow me to make a few comments on that important issue.

First of all, the need for greater coherence between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UN-Women can hardly be overemphasized. That is necessary not only for operational effectiveness but also for the optimal utilization of scarce resources.

There is a need to avoid making standardized prescriptions when dealing with situations of armed conflict. The specific causes and characteristics of each armed conflict vary, and so will possible approaches and solutions. United Nations peacekeeping and political missions should be provided the necessary flexibility to deal with specific situations.

It is also important to recognize that some structural changes can take place only in the mid to the long term. Such changes include the encouragement and consolidation of democratic ideals and practices and effective improvements in socioeconomic conditions. The task of capacity-building and strengthening Government institutions, including in the areas of security and justice, is therefore extremely critical to sustainable peace. United Nations support and guidance are crucial, but ownership by the State concerned is equally important in order for institutions to be consolidated.

We support the United Nations efforts to deploy greater numbers of women's protection advisers and gender advisers to its missions. The mandate provided by the Security Council on women and peace and security also necessarily requires more resources for effective, sustained results.

The promotion and protection of the human rights of women and girls in armed conflict continue to pose a pressing challenge. There should be zero tolerance for gender-based violence and sexual violence. All cases of gender-based violence must be promptly investigated and its perpetrators prosecuted.

However, we would urge caution in drawing generalized linkages between sexual violence and issues such as the exploitation of mineral resources and internal displacement, for example, based, as they are, on specific country experiences, as the recent report of the Secretary General (S/2013/149) suggests. It is pertinent to mention in that regard that the report itself points to the presence of armed conflict as the consistent backdrop in all those situations. It is also critical that the mandates given by the Security Council be observed and that the report remain focused on the situations of armed conflict on the Council's agenda. The so-called situations of concern are not part of that mandate.

While United Nations peacekeeping missions have provided critical support for gender-related issues in countries emerging from armed conflict, we agree with the report's assertion that it is equally important to pay adequate attention to security-sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, so as to avoid the risk of relapse. There is also a need for an increased deployment of female military and police personnel in United Nations peacekeeping operations and for appropriate training to enable United Nations peacekeepers to effectively discharge their responsibilities. India stands ready to place more female formed units at the disposal of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for deployment as required.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm India's commitment to contribute in a positive manner to United Nations efforts in the area of women and peace and security.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): I would like to start by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April. We wish you every success in leading the work of the Council during your presidency and thank your delegation for convening today's debate on an issue of crucial importance. We are grateful to Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and to his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for their briefings this morning. We also take this opportunity to congratulate Ms. Bangura on her appointment and to commend her for the great determination she has shown in carrying out her task.

Armed conflicts leave a devastating effect on societies around the world. Violence breeds more violence. Undoubtedly, women often bear the brunt of the many destructive consequences of war and strife.

In that regard, sexual violence in the context of armed conflicts remains pervasive, which is a devastating reality that has yet to be resolved and one requiring steadfast efforts at all levels.

In adopting resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010), the Security Council sent the clear message that sexual violence would not be tolerated and that ending sexual violence was essential for maintaining international peace and security. All States have the moral and legal responsibility to uphold the rights of all citizens, including women, and to protect them from sexual violence.

Protecting and promoting the rights of the Afghan people has been the cornerstone of all our efforts to build a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. Central to those efforts is enabling women to regain their historical role as proactive citizens in Afghan society. Afghanistan is pursuing the vigorous implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) through our national priority programme. We have also launched our national action plan for the women of Afghanistan as a 10-year blue print that contains specific and time-bound benchmarks for progress in various areas. As the implementation of the action plan continues apace, we are confident that we will realize our vision of seeing Afghan women thrive and be empowered in all sectors of society — the social, political and economic.

Afghanistan is fully committed to preventing all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence. In that regard, in 2009, we enacted a law on the elimination of violence against women, which provided for stronger judicial means to combat violence. Throughout the country, perpetrators of such crimes are increasingly being held accountable where such crimes are committed, with their cases being prosecuted before the law.

In reference to an observation made in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149), we wish to state with full confidence that the Government and the people of Afghanistan do not and will not tolerate impunity against any form of human rights violation. Together with our judicial authorities, the Afghan National Security Forces are working diligently to uphold law and order in all areas of the country. As we move forward, we are confident that our efforts will continue to bear fruit and that women will be further empowered.

We also wish to highlight the following. Afghanistan is fully committed to upholding human rights in Afghan detention centres. In that respect, a number of concrete measures have been taken by the National Directorate of Security, including capacity-building measures, human rights awareness workshops for personnel and the establishment of a human rights division to monitor and investigate human rights situations. The Afghan police and other security forces are following a similar approach. In the wake of the 20 January report by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) on alleged cases of prisoner mistreatment, President Karzai issued a decree establishing an independent commission to investigate the cases referred to in the UNAMA report. Since then, greater focus has been given to ensuring full adherence to human rights standards in Afghan detention centres.

As the security transition proceeds, Afghanistan is also resolute in achieving a successful outcome in its peace and reconciliation process, which is aimed at ending the current conflict and strife. By ending the conflict, we will eliminate the very conditions that were conducive to challenges in the field of human rights.

As members of the High Peace Council and as members of civil society, women play a central role in the peace process. The results of our peace and reconciliation efforts will in no way jeopardize the hard-won gains of the past 11 years, especially those relating to human rights, and to the rights of women in particular.

Before concluding, I wish to state that the international community has a key role to play in supporting continuous efforts aimed at ending all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence, in conflict-affected and post-conflict countries. For our part, Afghanistan remains firmly committed to playing its part in ensuring the full protection of women's rights around the world and to preventing sexual violence and all other forms of violations of human rights.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Ceylan (Turkey): At the outset, Mr. President, allow us to congratulate the Rwandan presidency for organizing today's important debate.

Turkey has aligned itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the observer of the European Union. I shall therefore be very brief.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/149) and the statements made today make clear that, over the past three and a half years, effective action has been taken by the United Nations to prevent and address the scourge of sexual violence in conflict. We also note with satisfaction the activities and initiatives undertaken by UN-Women, including through the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, to which Turkey is a contributor.

Despite those efforts, sexual violence in conflict remains prevalent. Both the report of the Secretary-General and the findings of the international commission of inquiry indicate the occurrence of serious cases of sexual violence in the course of the conflict taking place just across our border with Syria. In that regard, we welcome the intention of Special Representative Bangura to visit Syria to investigate the reports of abuses.

As of today, Turkey hosts more than 190,000 Syrians in 17 camps. There are another 100,000 who have made their way to various Turkish cities and towns. The massive flight of Syrians out of their country is certainly because the Syrian regime does not care about their safety and well-being. Therefore, the groundless remarks made earlier today regarding the camps in Turkey should be read through that prism. The camps in Turkey have been visited by many international representatives and United Nations dignitaries, including Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. I do not wish to repeat here yet again their comments and praise. By attributing groundless allegations to others, the perpetrators of the massive humanitarian crisis in Syria are trying to divert attention from their brutal and inhumane policies. That futile approach will certainly not prevail.

The President: The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give her the floor.

Ms. Alsaleh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to respond to some claims just made by the representatives of Qatar and Turkey concerning my country.

What we have heard today from some delegations — and this is extremely important, as we have already said — is that the ending sexual violence, combating it in conflict situations and eliminating the consequences of armed conflict can be achieved by removing the root causes of those scourges, stopping the financing for terrorism, ending interference in the internal affairs of States and combating policies that instigate sexual violence against women.

We would like to reaffirm that the negative roles that Qatar and Turkey have played, which are no secret to anyone in this international Organization, have contributed to aggravating the situation in Syria, rather than to finding a settlement thereto. Some sheikhs in Qatar provide all kinds of support to terrorists, in particular those affiliated with Al-Qaida, by providing money, weapons and media support.

I must not neglect to mention the actions by the Turkish authorities in smuggling mercenaries and weapons through our common borders and the rape by soldiers of Syrian refugee women in camps established on Turkish territory. I would like to recall that, on more than one occasion, many officials, including officials from the Turkish Parliament, were prevented from visiting certain camps on Turkish territory.

In conclusion, we would like to reaffirm that the ambiguous role played by the sheikhs of Qatar will not go unnoticed by the Syrian people. The Syrian people will in the future prosecute all those who have committed crimes against them. We have specialized national committees tasked with investigating all those crimes, which will be pursued in due course.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.6949

Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

Provisional

6949th meeting

Thursday, 18 April 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Gasana	(Rwanda)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Azerbaijan	Mr. Musayev
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Morocco	Mr. Loulichki
	Pakistan	Mr. Masood Khan
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Shin Dong Ik
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Togo	Mr. M'Beou
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following to participate in this meeting: Baroness Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; and Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. António Guterres, who is participating in today's meeting via videoteleconference from Geneva.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Baroness Amos.

Ms. Amos: The situation in Syria is a humanitarian catastrophe, with ordinary people paying a price for the failure to end the conflict. The parties to the conflict have become increasingly entrenched in the rhetoric and reality of war, with total disregard for the impact on people's lives. This body has been unable to reach the consensus necessary to support a political resolution to the crisis.

The destruction of essential infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, the devaluation of the currency, rising food prices, a shortage of fuel and electricity and a lack of water has had an impact on the majority of Syrians. The needs are growing rapidly and are most severe in the conflict and opposition-controlled areas. The latest figures show 6.8 million people in need, 4.25 million people internally displaced and an additional 1.3 million who have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. The economic collapse has led to a consequential collapse in people's coping mechanisms. At the same time that needs are growing dramatically, so, too, are the constraints inhibiting our ability to scale up the humanitarian response.

Therefore, the question facing all of us around this table is: when is not enough too little, and when does continuing to do too little become part of the problem?

Syria's main cities have been devastated by the conflict. Dayr al-Zawr, Hama, Homs and Idlib have been reduced to rubble. A United Nations inter-agency convoy that crossed the front lines in Aleppo last week witnessed the extraordinary destruction in the city. Large parts do not have running water because there is no electricity. Waste is piling up, raising fears that diseases will multiply as the summer heat approaches. There are growing concerns about outbreaks of diarrhoea and, potentially, even cholera if the most basic of services cannot be urgently restored. The group visited a hospital in Aleppo, where more than 3,500 war-wounded patients had reportedly been treated. There is no blood bank, and doctors are performing surgery at times without anaesthetics or even suture thread. The hospital and its staff are regularly hit during fighting.

However, our descriptions cannot begin to give the Council the real picture of the horrors being meted out every day. We have heard testimonies of houses burned with families inside and of people being bombed and killed while queuing for a piece of bread. That is the reality of Syria today.

Children are among the ones who suffer most. More than 3 million have already been affected, including 2 million displaced. Children have been murdered, tortured and subjected to sexual violence. Many do not have enough food to eat. Millions have been traumatized by the horrors they have witnessed. The brutal conflict is not only shattering Syria's present, it is also destroying its future.

The High Commissioner for Refugees will brief the Council on the situation of the more than 1.3 million Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries. I share his concern about the growing impact of the refugee crisis on neighbouring countries, particularly Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. We urgently need to increase our support to those countries and give them the help they need to continue to keep their borders open.

I visited Syria four times in the past year. My most recent visit was in January, and I was able to report to the Council areas of improvement in our relationship with the Syrian Government, including their agreement that United Nations humanitarian agencies and our partners could access all areas of Syria and their agreement to fast-track administrative procedures to facilitate an effective humanitarian response.

I regret to inform the Council that, since my visit in January, bureaucratic obstacles have grown and are inhibiting our ability to respond. Twenty-one visas are pending, many for more than two months. All aid convoys require 72 hours' notice, with as many as 10 notes verbale being exchanged to gain approval for a single convoy. The approved list of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has recently been reduced, from 110 to 29. Only four additional international NGOs have been approved this year and, given the bureaucratic hurdles, only one is operational.

The approval to open United Nations hubs in six key cities was issued more than a year ago, yet this has only been operationalized recently for two cities, with a commitment to continue discussions on two more. Notwithstanding the fact that NGOs are cleared to accept United Nations funding, every project is considered in detail by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the result that projects designed in February for funding under the Central Emergency Response Fund are still awaiting final approval in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Twenty-two armoured vehicles, which are so vital for staff security, are still pending approval for import. In the past 24 hours, we have been informed that every truck needs a permit signed by two ministers to enable clearance through Government checkpoints. When I tell the Council that a convoy from Damascus to Aleppo goes through 50 checkpoints, half of them Government-controlled, members will appreciate the impossibility of that request. We cannot do business that way.

The continued conflict and the proliferation of armed groups has made Syria a highly unpredictable and insecure environment, jeopardizing aid organizations' operations. In the past two months, access to those in the most severe need has diminished. Homs is a good example. In February and March, 276,000 people in the most severe need were effectively cut off from assistance, as the Government had closed down Syrian Arab Red Crescent cross-line operations. We have similar restrictions in Rif Damascus, Aleppo, Dar'a and elsewhere. They have all been the target of United Nations-led cross-line missions, but, due to access restrictions, the scale of aid delivered falls far short of the needs.

In the case of Aleppo, it is important to highlight that, contrary to some widely held perceptions, aid flows across the Turkish border have significantly declined in the past two months. The main crossing point at Kilis, through which 50 per cent of aid reportedly flows, has recorded a reduction to approximately 20 trucks per day, down from between 50 and 80 trucks two months ago. The assistance coordination unit, the humanitarian arm of the Syrian coalition, has limited capacity and access. We are therefore not reaching those most urgently in need of our help, that is, the 2.5 million people in Aleppo and north of the city. The strengthening of the assistance coordination unit should not come at the expense of Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

The data available to us shows that the people in the opposition-held areas are in the most urgent need. We have a duty and a responsibility to try to reach them. During my recent visit to Turkey, I was horrified to hear accounts of children dying of hunger in those areas. We need to get aid into those hard-to-reach areas. It is difficult to do that cross-line because of bureaucratic constraints.

The Council needs to consider alternative forms of aid delivery, including cross-border operations, because too many lives are being lost. When I tell the Council that the journey from Damascus to Aleppo is 310 kilometres, with the 50 checkpoints that I mentioned, members should remember what I said about the need for ministers now to sign off each truck — the journey from Kilis to Aleppo is just 56 kilometres.

Across the country, humanitarian convoys are regularly attacked or shot at and their personnel are intimidated or kidnapped. As an example, on 21 March, a World Health Organization (WHO) convoy carrying medical assistance for 80,000 people was hijacked by an armed group on its way from Tartus to Aleppo, and all the supplies were stolen. Yet, despite the threat, humanitarian workers continue their critical work.

I want to pay particular tribute to the work of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers. They have shown incredible dedication, impartiality and courage since the beginning of the conflict. Many of them do not hesitate to risk their lives every day to bring assistance to the people in need, whether they live in Government- or opposition-controlled areas. Eighteen have been killed in the course of their humanitarian work. Given its network across the country and its capacity to negotiate access to almost all the affected areas, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent is an invaluable partner to the United Nations and the other humanitarian organizations in Syria. They proved it again during the mission to Aleppo last weekend, when its volunteers were welcomed on both sides of the line. We all need to support the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. Syria needs it.

There has been a qualitative and quantitative step-change in the United Nations agency presence and response in Syria, including the establishment of a hub in Homs. The deployment of a senior resident humanitarian coordinator to oversee the response has finally been agreed with the Government and is expected in the coming weeks. In March, World Food Programme food assistance reached close to 2 million people across the country, many of whom are in areas under opposition control. UNICEF and partners have reached more than 5 million people with safe drinking water, and they aim to reach an additional 5 million in the coming months through the chlorination and repair of urban and rural water supply systems. The provision of primary and secondary health-care services to approximately 2.7 million Syrians has been supported by the WHO and its partners. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East continues to assist the 400,000 Palestinian refugees, many of whom face future displacement.

I can also report some improvement in the funding situation since my last briefing to the Council. About half of the $1.5 billion required to cover Syria's humanitarian needs until June has been received, with the recent allocation of the $300 million pledged by the Kuwaiti Government in January — a welcome and timely disbursement by the Amir of Kuwait. I ask those Member States that have not yet converted their conference pledges to cash to do so urgently.

I cannot overstate the seriousness of the current situation in Syria. I do not have an answer for those Syrians to whom I have spoken who ask me why the world has abandoned them. While the humanitarian situation on the ground is becoming increasingly disastrous every day, the limitations on the ground have forced us into being precariously close to suspending some critical humanitarian operations.

We are approaching the point of no return. Members of the international community, particularly members of the Council, must urgently come together in support of the Syrian people. As a matter of priority, the Security Council must find ways to reduce the level of violence and to stop the bloodshed. Parties must be reminded of their obligation to protect civilians and to abide by international humanitarian law. The consequences of violating those rules must be made clear to all. The protection of medical facilities, staff and patients, in particular, must be ensured at all times. Parties must demilitarize hospitals and, in the conduct of hostilities, must take all precautionary measures to avoid hitting medical facilities or staff.

The Council must also request the parties to ensure the safe and unimpeded access of aid organizations to those in need in all areas of Syria. It is not acceptable that humanitarian workers continue to be targeted while bringing relief to people. If some routes are not safe, it is the responsibility of the parties to identify alternative routes, including across international borders.

We all look to the Council to guarantee the peace and security of the people of our world. My appeal is on behalf of not only the Syrian people but also all those seeking to assist them. We are losing hope. We cannot do our jobs properly. We look to the Council to take the action necessary to end the brutal conflict.

The President: I thank Ms. Amos for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Guterres.

Mr. Guterres: First of all, I want to thank the Security Council for this new opportunity to address it on the Syrian refugee crisis.

Re-reading what I said in my last intervention, in February, I am almost tempted to limit my present statement to just 10 seconds. Everything that I said last time is still true, but it has all got much worse. If nothing politically dramatic happens, things will go on getting worse for the months to come.

Refugees were fleeing Syria at a rate of about 3,000 a day in December. That number grew to 5,000 in January. Eight thousand people have crossed Syria's borders every single day since February. That totals 400,000 new refugees in the seven weeks since my last briefing.

As of yesterday, counting only those registered or waiting to be registered, there were 1,367,413 Syrian refugees across the Middle East and North Africa. Including the internally displaced, a quarter of the entire population of Syria has been forced to leave their homes. The plight of Palestinian refugees remains as dramatic as I last reported.

However, such stark numbers say little about the horrendous suffering of a people, the progressive collapse of a State and the physical destruction of a country.

Let us be very clear: there is no humanitarian solution for the Syrian crisis. That is why it is so tragic that we are not even seeing an inch of progress towards a political solution. We as humanitarians, therefore, are forced to go on planning for the impossible. Together with our 60 partner organizations and the host States, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is now preparing the fifth version of our regional response plan to assist the ever-growing number of refugees. Valerie Amos, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, is leading similar efforts to update the humanitarian assistance plan inside Syria.

That process is still ongoing, but the preliminary planning figures are terrifying. If nothing changes, at the current pace there may be up to 3.5 million Syrian refugees by the end of this year, and probably up to 6.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance inside the country. That is not just frightening; it risks becoming simply unsustainable. There is no way to adequately respond to the enormous humanitarian needs those figures represent, and it is difficult to imagine how a nation can endure so much suffering.

I know that, as High Commissioner for Refugees, I should confine my remarks to the scope of my mandate. As a citizen of the world, however, I cannot refrain from asking: is there no way to stop this fighting so as to open the door for a political solution? But while we continue to wait for a miracle to happen, it is our duty to do everything we can to protect, assist and respect the dignity of all those Syrians who have sought safety abroad, mainly in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq.

For that to be possible, all of the humanitarian actors involved need levels of financial support that are out of proportion with the established humanitarian aid budgets of traditional donors. Together with my colleagues from UNICEF, the World Food Programme and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, I have been asking Governments and parliaments to establish extraordinary funding mechanisms for the Syria crisis. I am also extremely grateful for the generous recent contribution from the Government of Kuwait to multilateral aid agencies, and I hope others will follow that example. We cannot let the Syrian people down. The Syrian people, who have always been extremely generous in hosting refugees from Palestine and Iraq, always sharing their resources with them, now need our support.

Syria is much more than a humanitarian crisis. In my last intervention before the Council, I spoke about the real risk of the conflict spilling over across the region and of the situation escalating into a political, security and total humanitarian disaster that would completely overwhelm the international response capacity.

The first step necessary to avoid such an escalation is for the international community to provide massive support, especially to the two countries that are the most dramatically impacted by the Syrian conflict and the refugee outflow it has caused: Jordan and Lebanon.

All of Syria's neighbours need international solidarity, and one should not forget that Turkey in particular has been making an enormous financial investment of more than $750 million in direct assistance alone to over 300,000 Syrian refugees. However, Jordan and Lebanon, each hosting about a third of the registered refugee population in the region, must be provided especially solid support.

For Lebanon, the Syrian crisis has become an existential threat. The population has grown by more than 10 per cent, if one counts the registered Syrian refugees alone. Most of them are staying in the country's poorest regions. Taking into account the refugees who are not seeking registration and Syrian migrant workers, some even estimate that up to a quarter of the population of Lebanon may now be Syrian.

Refugees are staying with local families and scattered across nearly 1,200 towns and villages. Some Lebanese households host more than 25 Syrians under their roofs. The political wisdom of Lebanon's leadership has so far kept the country out of the Syrian conflict. But security incidents along the border pose a serious challenge for Lebanon. In addition to facing dire economic consequences because of its neighbour's internal turmoil, Lebanon has not received any direct international support in many months. That has to change urgently. International solidarity must match the enormous effort that the country has been making to step up the response to the Syrian crisis and to deal with its staggering implications for the Lebanese economy and delicate social and political balance.

Jordan is also coming under tremendous pressure as a result of the conflict next door. Completely dependent on energy imports, and with water scarcity becoming a major problem, the Jordanian economy was already struggling before turmoil broke out in Syria. But the situation has become increasingly fragile since 2011. Like in Lebanon, the Syria crisis has caused a significant drop in revenues from trade, tourism and foreign investment, compounded by the impact of a very large refugee influx.

Jordan's economic indicators are worrying, with unsustainable public and external deficit levels, and the country has had to apply tough austerity measures. My appeal to the international community is to extend the massive financial support that Jordan needs, with the understanding that its economic adjustment requires sufficient flexibility to prevent levels of social unrest that could entirely jeopardize the stability of the country.

I know from the experience of my own country what austerity means, and what impact it has on society. But in Jordan, the regional context is infinitely more fragile than in southern Europe, and the social and political risks are incomparably higher.

Helping Syria's neighbours deal with the human fallout of this terrible conflict is crucial for preserving the stability of the entire region. This is not just another refugee crisis; what happens in Syria and in the neighbouring countries potentially has much wider, even global, implications. By keeping their borders open to thousands of refugees fleeing day after day, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and others are doing an extraordinary service to the international community. Failure to give those countries the support that they need to continue providing sanctuary to so many suffering Syrians would not only mean abandoning a people and a whole region. It would be the world's blindness to its own best interest.

The President: I thank Mr. Guterres for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Bangura.

Ms. Bangura: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council and for your continued and unwavering support in addressing sexual violence in conflict.

Today I am here to plead with the Council on behalf of the victims of sexual violence in Syria. Those victims have been raped, tortured and humiliated. They are either internally displaced or live as refugees. They do not have a voice, and they are not part of any statistics. We estimate that there are hundreds of survivors, but this could be only the tip of the iceberg.

Women and girls displaced by the conflict relate that sexual violence, including rape, is one of the main reasons why they have fled their homes and left the country. We hear of girls being raped in front of their fathers, wives in front of their husbands. We are aware that both Government forces and opposition fighters are abducting women and girls to extract intelligence, at times using them as leverage for the release of prisoners. With the conflict becoming increasingly sectarian and violations more militarized, the presence of foreign fighters, including those affiliated with Islamist groups, who have joined armed opposition groups have increased the vulnerability of civilians and the possibility of revenge rapes against them.

Earlier this year, in February, I briefed the Security Council and brought to the Council's attention the incidents of sexual violence highlighted in the report of the international commission of inquiry on Syria. The commission noted numerous cases of sexual violence committed by Government forces and the Shabbiha, including the use of sexual violence in detention, the targeting of family members of opposition fighters, and the rape of women and girls during house searches and at checkpoints, which could amount to crimes against humanity or war crimes.

The commission, in its March update, reported that those widespread patterns of sexual violations continued. In one indicative case, between 25 and 60 women were forcibly disembarked from a bus and detained by Government forces, with multiple accounts alleging that the women were sexually abused.

The systematic practice of sexual violence in detention as part of an organized policy against women, men and even children is also appalling. A 14-year old boy was threatened with rape during interrogation, while a 14-year old girl, whose mother had links with the opposition, was abducted from the streets by four men, two of whom were in military uniform. The girl was held captive for days. During interrogation, she was beaten with electrical wire, given injections and had cigarettes extinguished on her chest. She was denied food and water for extended periods of time and was then raped by four men. On her release, the girl was taken out of the country. Since then, she has tried to commit suicide three times.

What was those children's crimes? The boy could have been our son; the girl could have been our daughter. We know that war can be brutal, but to fight it on the bodies of women and children — humiliating and punishing them and subjecting them to absolute terror — can never be acceptable.

In response to my briefing to the Security Council in February, the Syrian Government shared with me, in a letter, details of some incidents of kidnapping, sexual violence, torture and other serious human rights violations carried out by opposition fighters, as well as information about the arrests of some of those perpetrators by Syrian security forces. The International Federation for Human Rights interviewed a Syrian man who had witnessed the kidnapping of a young girl by elements of the Free Syrian Army. The girl was raped and then killed. Her body was thrown in front of her house, with the blame allegedly attributed to the Syrian Army. I strongly urge the leadership of the Free Syrian Army and other armed groups to halt such violations, to issue clear directives to commanders throughout their chains of command to prevent sexual violence, and to hold those who commit, command or condone such crimes accountable.

I also urge President Al-Assad, in the strongest terms possible, to ensure that all persons in Government custody are treated humanely, in accordance with international human rights and humanitarian law. I reiterate my call for the Syrian authorities to investigate all allegations of sexual violence and to hold each and every perpetrator accountable.

The perpetrators I have referred to know that the world is watching. They know that the international community will hold those responsible for such heinous acts liable. They can misinform and they can lie, but my message to them is clear: justice may be delayed, but it will not be denied. We will pursue them by any and all means, we will find them, and one day bring them to justice.

It is a terrible truth that sexual violence maims the survivors not only physically, but also psychologically and socially, with deep and long-lasting consequences. The stigma that attaches to survivors means that crimes are rarely reported. Victims face the risk of honour killings by their family members or of being forcibly married to their rapists. Survivors feel they would rather be killed than raped. In fact, many have tried to commit suicide.

While we work to end conflicts, we must not forget our obligations to the survivors of sexual violence. They need support to rebuild their lives, with urgent access to emergency medical services, including services to prevent pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, as well as legal assistance and social support. The United Nations and non-governmental organization partners are putting in place services and referral and coordination mechanisms in some neighbouring countries, but greater support and more targeted funding are required. One of the priorities is to establish medical centres in border areas to address war injuries, including sexual violence. It is also imperative that services for survivors be made available and accessible inside Syria.

As we just heard from my two colleagues, thousands of people flee Syria every day to neighbouring countries in search of safety and protection, but they continue to be vulnerable. In various refugee camps, a distressing trend of coerced marriage of young Syrian girls has emerged, with families seeking to lessen the burden of dependents on their dwindling resources. However, I am heartened to note that at least one report from a camp in Jordan indicates that families are rejecting marriage offers from outsiders and have chosen to delay the marriage of their girls in view of the unstable environment. Allegations of the human trafficking of young women and girls are also on the rise, while a severe shortage of medical and psychosocial counselling services remains.

There are also those in Syria who are less visible and less heard from, but no less vulnerable — the Syrians who are uprooted within their country, many of whom, as we just heard from my colleague, Ms. Amos, remain out of reach of international assistance and media attention. What do we know about the human rights violations that are being perpetrated against displaced women and children? What measures can we put in place to prevent and respond to sexual violence against them?

As I recently saw in Somalia, the insecure nature of internally displaced person camps and settlements, the presence of armed men in and around such camps and the fact that the camp population consists mostly of single women, female-headed households and widows means that they are easy prey for sexual violence. It is imperative that the Government allow access for human rights monitors with a view to reporting, as well as for service providers to be able to respond to survivors of sexual violence.

We have watched and we have discussed, and now it is time to take concrete action. My resolve in fighting sexual violence in conflict is strengthened, and I intend to visit Syria as soon as possible. In my corner, I have the support of the Security Council and the support, expressed in a declaration signed last week, of the Group of Eight. Therefore, on behalf of the survivors, I once again plead with the members of Security Council and Governments with influence over the parties to the conflict to demonstrate their commitment and to translate their will into results by ending the carnage and protecting the Syrian people, especially women and children.

The President: I thank Ms. Bangura for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Zerrougui.

Ms. Zerrougui: I would like to start by thanking you, Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to speak before the Security Council today. The Syrian conflict, now entering its third year, has been a catastrophe for the civilian population. Children have suffered most and in the most heartbreaking ways. The emergency is indeed a children's crisis. There are now more than 3 million children inside Syria who have been affected, of whom almost 2 million are internally displaced. Additionally, more than 600,000 children are refugees in the subregion.

Although we can never know the extent of the violations against children while the conflict continues to rage, thousands of children have been killed and thousands more have been injured and maimed in the ongoing fighting. Children have been killed in their homes and in their schools; some have died trying to reach hospitals or while hiding in shelters. The use of cluster munitions has resulted in hundreds of children losing hands, arms or legs. Also of concern is the fact that children in need of urgent medical care are often not able to gain access to adequate medical assistance. Well over half of Syria's health facilities are either damaged or cannot safely be reached, and approximately 40 per cent of hospitals are inoperative. Many children have recounted experiences of days spent in makeshift hospitals and travelling under extreme conditions to reach hospitals in safe areas or in neighbouring countries.

Since the beginning of the conflict, the education system has been deeply impacted, with many schools being occupied by warring parties, damaged or destroyed. In addition, we are receiving reports of teachers being killed, threatened and forced to flee. Recent figures show that an estimated 2,500 schools are damaged or destroyed, while approximately 2,000 are being used as shelters for internally displaced persons (IDPs). In certain areas, children have not been to school in more than 18 months. In the Aleppo governorate, school attendance has dropped to 6 per cent. Girls' attendance has been particularly affected by the insecurity. Future generations of Syrians are being denied the right to learn in peace.

As previously noted, refugee children inside Syria are in a difficult position. Palestinian and other refugee children have been killed or forced to flee their homes and to live in need in IDP shelters. Only 35 per cent of Palestinian children have access to schools today, and many have fled to neighbouring countries out of fear for their safety. When I visited Damascus in December of last year, I met many Palestinian IDP children in Yarmouk Camp who were living in dire circumstances. Today, the security situation in Yarmouk is precarious, and I cannot help but think about those children and the fear and anxiety they and their families must live with each day.

In the current conflict, with no end in sight, children are becoming increasingly vulnerable to recruitment and use, both direct and indirect, by all parties to the conflict. My Office has been gathering information about the use of children as young as 10 years of age in various ways, such as porters, messengers and combatants, by opposition groups. My Office also received information regarding the use of children as human shields by Government forces. I call on all parties to take immediate measures to halt any association of children.

The disproportionate use of force and the fact that combat is largely taking place in civilian areas, without any precautionary measures and with the use of indiscriminate weapons, are having serious effects on the child victims of bombardment and other violence, but also on the wider societal fabric that protects children, their families and caregivers. I personally witnessed the extreme levels of destruction in civilian areas in Homs and Rif Damascus during my recent visit. Additionally, the impact of high levels of violence on all children in Syria is serious and will have a long-term effect for the future of the country. When I last visited, all of the children and families with whom I spoke recounted horrific stories of death and destruction — a cycle of violence with no end.

I am here not only to brief the Council on the terrible impact that the conflict is having on the children of Syria, but to implore it to do more to make all parties take up their responsibilities to protect the children of Syria. My colleagues have explained in detail the ever-smaller space afforded to the United Nations and its partners to provide life-saving assistance. But we continue to strive to do what is necessary and what we can in those dire circumstances. I have held discussions with both the Government and the opposition forces and have received commitments from both sides, but the space to act on those commitments is shrinking. In particular, I would like to ask the Council to remind all parties of their responsibilities to prevent violations against children during conflict and to issue public commitments.

The Government should commit to take all the necessary precautions during combat to prevent child death and injury, avoid the use of heavy weaponry in civilian areas and cease immediately its use of human shields and investigate all allegations in that regard. In addition, it must ensure the safety of all health and education facilities in areas it controls.

The opposition forces should fulfil their commitments to respect applicable international humanitarian law and, in particular, engage with the United Nations on their commitment to address the issue of children among their ranks.

The urgent action of the Council on behalf of those children cannot wait another day, as each day is at the cost of countless lives.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Sir, for successfully managing the work of the Security Council this month. By the same token, I would also like to thank the ladies and the gentleman who briefed us at this meeting.

Today, the Syrian people are celebrating the sixty-seventh anniversary of Syria's independence from French colonizers. I take this opportunity at the Security Council table to salute the soul of the first martyr who fell in the fight against the colonizer, who was then the Minister for Defence, Yousef Al-Azmeh. I would like to assure him that the legacy he entrusted to the Syrian people is in capable hands.

The people of my homeland, Syria, oppose occupation and reject dominance and subjugation, as everybody knows. Anyone who may think, even for a moment, of turning back the clock is delusional, because the people of Syria, who have thousands of years of history, will not allow anyone — however great or mighty, working openly or covertly, old or new, near or far — to threaten their sovereignty, dignity, political independence and national unity. Although there are some differences in the way Syrian citizens love their homeland, they are all determined to stand united in the face of any attempt to undermine Syria's dignity, its political independence and its well-established national principles.

Allow me to thank Ms. Valerie Amos, Ms. Margaret Chan, Ms. Ertharin Cousin, Mr. Antonio Guterres and Mr. Anthony Lake for the appeal they issued on behalf of the United Nations in the *New York Times* on 15 April. We applaud the humanitarian feeling they expressed towards Syria and its people. We would have wished that their appeal had touched upon the core issues causing the suffering of the Syrian people and addressed the state of the unilateral, coercive and illegal measures imposed on them. We would also have wished that it had mentioned what Syrians are experiencing in terms of the dangers, challenges and threats stemming from the spread of international terrorism on Syrian territory and the impact of that indiscriminate terrorism, as illustrated by the mass killing, displacement and destruction of not only infrastructure and human beings, but of all that Syria represents in the region, namely, coexistence, social harmony, religious tolerance and cultural and ethnic diversity. Syria has a balancing role to play in a volatile and sensitive area of the world. The region's many assets are being trampled by the bloody confluence of Arabs who live in an era of ignorance and Israel's interests and its protectors.

The crisis in Syria has revealed serious flaws in the system of international relations and the mechanisms for applying the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

All the challenges and risks faced by Syria are being considered in a manner riddled with unprecedented double standards and scandalous political hypocrisy. There is no longer any doubt that the mechanisms of so-called international action function in a selective manner. The indiscriminate terrorism that is battering my country finds zealous supporters here among us: those who are working to give it legitimacy in the media, as well as politically and diplomatically. They give legitimacy to that terrorism as part of a movement in my country, while they claim to be fighting the same terrorism in Mali, the African Sahel and Libya.

There are also those who defend and seek to give legal status to the economic blockade that is stifling my country's capabilities and undermining the living conditions of its people, while at the same time the European Union is discussing purchasing Syrian oil, which rightfully belongs to the Syrian people, from the terrorist groups that control certain oil wells in Syria. I would like to take this opportunity to say that the Government of Syria will bring before the Council all those who finance terrorism in my country, either by purchasing stolen oil from terrorist groups or in any other manner. Our charge against them will be financing terrorism rather than eliminating it.

We therefore wish to say today that there is no justification for any Western Government to ignore the terrorists among its citizens crossing international borders into Syria and actively participating in the shedding of Syrian blood. After today, the Syrian people will not forgive those who have facilitated the movement of thousands of European and other Western terrorists and jihadists, who are sponsored by well-known intelligence agencies, across the borders of dozens of countries — from Australia to the United States of America — with the ultimate goal of reaching the Turkish, Lebanese and Jordanian borders with Syria, where they are sheltered and accommodated in training camps and then enter my country and spread destruction and sabotage and shed innocent blood. We also cannot forget the Israeli partnership with Salafist, Takfiri and terrorist groups, which enables those armed groups to cross the separation line into the occupied Syrian Golan and to have their wounded treated in Israeli hospitals before returning them to Syrian territory, once again across the separation line.

Those States and parties, through the actions I just mentioned, seek to have their illegal and immoral actions damage the sovereignty, role and status of Syria in the United Nations. Legal and political scholars may have plenty of time to study the case of Syria, a founding State Member of the United Nations, and what it was subjected to at the hands of political wheelers and dealers.

My Government emphasizes its commitment to its obligations towards the United Nations in accordance with the 2013 humanitarian response plan, which helped deliver humanitarian assistance to various regions of Syria, including the A'zaz area, which is approximately 1 kilometre from the Turkish border. We are undertaking such actions with the United Nations within the framework of General Assembly resolution 46/182.

The ability of the Syrian Government to fully comply with the humanitarian response plan has been hampered by poor funding and the conditions imposed. The commitments announced by donors in the media, including those undertaken at the Kuwait meeting held in January and at a number of other international forums, remain unfulfilled. We all know that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has received only 34 per cent of the requisite funding. That confirms what we have said many times before, namely, that those pledges are nothing but media propaganda promoted by crisis mongers and those who spread lies.

In response to the cooperation of the Syrian Government, there are parties, known to everyone, who shamelessly insist on contributing to sustaining the cycle of violence in my country through support to terrorist groups affiliated with Al-Qaida, which is a clear threat to peace and security in Syria, the region and the world. Many reports indicate that some Governments' consciences have been bought off by petrodollars and that they have opened their borders to the passage of weapons to be delivered to groups responsible for indiscriminate acts of terrorism in my country. Those weapons are purchased by Qatari and Saudi petrodollars from several sources, which are well known to everyone, and smuggled to this day across the borders of some of Syria's neighbouring countries from Libyan arms depots, according to the final report (S/2012/163) of the Panel of Experts on Libya established pursuant to resolution 1973 (2011). I have a copy of that report with me here, which refers to the smuggling of weapons from Libya and other places, with financing from the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. This is not a report prepared by my Government, but by the Council's own experts.

I would like to emphasize the exclusive responsibility of the Syrian Government for protecting its citizens, in accordance with the principles of international law and in a manner that safeguards its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and restores its constructive leadership role on the international stage.

The crude and excessively compliant and aggressive propaganda that some Governments are seeking to promote is intended to justify their attempts to interfere in Syria's domestic affairs — in breach of Syria's sovereignty — on pretexts such as humanitarian intervention, imposing no-fly zones, establishing safe humanitarian corridors and the concept of the responsibility to protect.

Some States hosting Syrian refugees seek to exacerbate the Syrian refugee crisis by preventing them from returning to their homeland and are trading on their suffering, despite the repeated and continued requests of the Syrian Government to the Governments of those States to allow Syrians who want to return to their homes to do so.

With regard to sexual violence, I would like to recall the statement that I delivered on behalf of my country to the Security Council yesterday, 17 April (see S/PV.6948). I should like to add that, throughout its history, Syria has never witnessed such heinous crimes as those being perpetrated today by jihadist thugs and bandits. Women in Syria used to take pride in the secure and safe environment provided to them to play their natural role in society. Syria used to rank third in the world in terms of safety. However, the complex phenomenon of sabotage has entered Syrian society and has destroyed that way of life in Syria. Armed terrorist groups with Wahhabi, Salafist and Takfiri ideologies imported from petrodollar Gulf countries entered from neighbouring countries. Such groups, backed by the extensive financial, intelligence, military and media support and weapons provided by certain Arabs from a bygone era of ignorance and Western collusion, in partnership with Israel, have worked deliberately and systematically to sabotage the security and safety of Syrians, including women and children.

Dozens of political and media reports, as well as the testimonies of well-known non-governmental groups, have shown that armed terrorist groups have resorted to recruiting children into their ranks. They force them to take up arms, participate in terrorist acts and carry out the orders of the leaders of the armed groups in order to perpetrate acts of murder and sabotage against public and private property. That is in addition to the burning, looting and destruction of more than 3,000 schools and kindergartens and dozens of hospitals and hundreds of laboratories — 1,500 laboratories, in fact, in Idlib and Halab, have been displaced to Turkey — about which we have sent an official complaint to the Council. That represents a blatant attack on the rights of an entire generation of children to the education and knowledge that will enable them to help build the country in the future.

During the deliberate attacks by terrorist armed groups on educational institutions and teachers in Syria, there have been documented cases of people being directly and indirectly threatened and prevented from sending their children to school, owing to terrorist groups bombing schools with improvised explosive devices or deliberately targeting schools with missiles. Those incidents were repeated at the start of the school year in Syria.

The Syrian Arab Republic has respected its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict since 2003.

Regrettably, no speakers have mentioned the terrorist suicide bombings that have frequently struck Syrian cities. They have not talked about the attack on Halab University and the killing of the engineering and architecture students in Damascus. All those incidents were not carried out by ghosts; they were undertaken by terrorist groups financed and supported by foreigners and trained abroad. There are no ghosts carrying out terrorist acts in Syria.

While States continue to strengthen their societies on the basis of diversity, pluralism, harmony and true citizenship, we see strong, subversive Powers seeking to shatter the social contract in our region, which is famous for its diversity, richness and plurality, by promoting a culture of religious, sectarian and factional divisions and encouraging the concept of slaughtering people on the basis of their identity. Such Powers seek to displace significant parts of our societies outside their homeland. There is no Christian member of Iraqi society in Iraq, or any Christian in Palestine. The conspirators against my country are about to succeed in removing our Christian citizens.

Such matters are extremely important in the work of the Security Council. Hundreds of churches in Syria have been burned, as well as in Iraq and other places. Hundreds of mosques have been destroyed. All those acts exist on the YouTube terrorist archive. Some accuse the Government of such heinous acts.

In that connection, I wish to emphasize that Syria will not allow another Sykes-Picot Agreement at the expense of the peoples of our region. Syria will remain the strongest link in dealing with any attempt to impose any new reality that is foreign to our region and its peoples, who have lived in harmony and coexistence with one another for centuries and have taught humankind that belonging to a homeland and respecting one's land are the greatest and most enduring emotions.

In conclusion, I would like to say that enough is enough. After two years of trading on the fate of Syria and the blood of its citizens, there must be sincere action to help my country, people and Government to move forward towards the political solution endorsed by the United Nations in resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012) and approved in the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). My Government insists on the implementation of that political solution through a Syrian-led inclusive national dialogue in which all Syrian people are represented. Such a dialogue will echo their voices internally, regionally and internationally, telling the entire world that enough is enough and to stop manipulating a country whose citizens have only shown goodness and love for all citizens of the world throughout their history.

A year ago, I addressed the Counter-Terrorism Committee and drew the Council's attention to the existence of Al-Qaida terrorism in Syria, but no one paid heed. Today, however, we have heard that there will be cooperation between Al-Qaida in Iraq and Al-Qaida in Syria. What we said a year ago was correct, and our reading of the political map was also correct.

Mr. Guterres, thankfully, stated that the crisis in Syria is not humanitarian in the main. That is true; the crisis in Syria is a humanitarian and political crisis in the main. Unless we deal with the main political dimension of the crisis, we will not be able to assist the Syrian people at the humanitarian level. Yes, there is a humanitarian crisis in Syria; we have mentioned that time and again. However, we need a correct legal reading of what is transpiring in the country, one that will put an end to the arrogance of and violations of international law by certain Powers that are very well known to all.

The smuggling of weapons was reported to the Security Council over a period of more than a year and a half. Those weapons, transported on ships from Libya via Lebanon and Turkey, were confiscated, and the information was submitted to the Council, but no one lifted a finger. Billions of dollars are spent on financing terrorism by means of the Gulf petrodollar, with everyone's knowledge. Weapons are being purchased in Croatia, financed by Saudi Arabia, transported to Jordan and then, via Turkey, to Syria. But no one responds. We are talking about the excruciating suffering of children and women here, and that is important and significant. We hope that the crisis will cease and that all criminals — Syrian and non-Syrian alike — will be brought to justice.

What about those who spend billions of dollars on funding terrorism? What about the resolution, adopted by the so-called League of Arab States, financing terrorism — a resolution adopted by an Arab summit to finance terrorism. The League pretends that it has a special envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, pursuing a peaceful solution. How can he pursue a peaceful solution while the Arab League is financing terrorism in Syria?

I wish to make one more comment, and I apologize for taking so long.

Two days ago I was watching Al-Arabiya, the Saudi channel. The channel hosted a terrorist who leads an Islamist group affiliated with Al-Qaida. It hosted that terrorist from Istanbul and held a dialogue with him from there. When the journalist asked him, "What will you do with the minorities in Syria if you take over?" He responded: "We will judge them according to the sharia". When asked what he meant by that, he said that "the individuals belonging to those minorities can either join Islam and pay a tax, or we will kill them with a sword". That terrorist, located in Istanbul, was hosted by the Saudi Al-Arabiya channel. Many people watched him; many innocent people in Libya and Tunisia, who come to Syria to kill and be killed, watched him. That is the right image of what is going on in Syria, and I leave it to the Council for its kind attention and consideration.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset, Mr. President, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council and on its work during the month of April. I am fully confident that, given the crisis and the suffering that your country, Rwanda, has known during its contemporary history, you more than anyone are aware of the human tragedy that is being experienced by the brotherly Syrian people.

I should like to express my thanks to Ms. Valerie Amos, Mr. António Guterres, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura and Ms. Leila Zerrougui for their respective important briefings.

Two years have passed since the crisis began in Syria, and the painful figures mentioned by the representative of the United Nations and its various organizations speak not only to the magnitude of that humanitarian disaster, but also to the inability of the international community to take the measures necessary to put an end to the cycle of violence and the intensifying massacres, as well as to the violations of human rights and the targeting of civilians going about their daily life. It is the responsibility of the Council and of the United Nations to ensure that the suffering of those people is recognized. The brotherly Syrian people – men, women, children and the elderly, wherever they may be – are always under the threat of bombings, or they have been displaced or become refugees in neighbouring countries. All of them deserve a better life that will meet their aspirations and hopes - a life in which their dignity and aspirations are respected.

From the Council, Lebanon has consistently reiterated its firm principled position of support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, as well as Lebanon's policy of distancing, which is aimed at preserving unity and stability. That policy, which has received support at the national and international levels, does not represent a distancing by Lebanon from the Syrian people in their humanitarian crisis. As the Minister for Social Affairs of Lebanon said last August in the Council (see S/PV.6826), Lebanon has never distanced itself from international law or international legality. It has also remained faithful to the historical, geographical and neighbourly ties between the Lebanese and the Syrian peoples. Lebanon has not forgotten that the Syrian people hosted hundreds of thousands of Lebanese refugees during the barbaric Israeli aggression against Lebanon during the July 2006 war.

As the Council is aware, the number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon who have been registered or who have received aid from the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees is approximately 416,000, up until 12 April of this year. That number does not include the tens of thousands who have not asked to be registered with the Office of the High Commissioner. According to statistics from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, by 31 March, more than 35,000 Palestinian displaced persons had come to Lebanon from Syria, with more than 3,000 refugees arriving every day. We expect that figure to reach 1.2 million before the end of the year. Furthermore, the number of people affected by that movement of people — combining Syrians, Palestinians and Lebanese returning from Syria, in addition to Lebanese host families — will reach 2.5 million before the end of the year.

According to United Nations agency statistics, approximately 34.8 per cent of those refugees have special needs, with 22.9 per cent of them being children in a precarious situation and approximately 10 per cent having serious medical conditions — bearing in mind that about half of the refugees in Lebanon and its neighbouring countries are children and young people.

We and others have ceaselessly issued warnings about the impact of the unending crisis, not only on Syria but also on neighbouring countries. We are now seeing the impact of the fighting in Syria, which has reached military dimensions, reaching the borders of Lebanon, which is threatening the security of my country. We condemn such violations, whatever their origin or whatever the reason for them.

With regard to the impact of the serious issue of refugees arising from the crisis, it has begun to affect Lebanese society and its composition. It is also having a substantial socioeconomic and security impact, given that the majority of refugees live in the poorest areas of my country. As a result, there is growing pressure on the labour market and more demand for basic resources, such as food, with the concomitant inflation and increases in housing costs that entails.

Let me reiterate today that Lebanon will never close its borders to anyone, individuals or families, who, fleeing the horrors of violence and destruction, come to seek refuge in our country. We will not send anyone back who comes to us.

Lebanon remains committed to providing assistance to all refugees from Syria and to seeing to all their essential needs in terms of protection, shelter, food, health care and education. But it is the right of Lebanon to ask neighbouring States and the international community to share the burden, given that ours is the smallest country in terms of size and the one with the least resources, even though we are the country receiving the greatest number of Syrian refugees. That number will very soon reach almost a quarter of the Lebanese population, which is the highest reception rate of all the countries hosting refugees.

The truth, as witnessed by representatives of the United Nations and its agencies, is that Lebanon will not be able to provide the necessary care to refugees if the numbers keep growing as they are now, whether the refugees be Syrians, Palestinians or even Lebanese returning from Syria. Lebanon will not be able to cope without an increase in assistance from the international community.

Among those who have spoken out on this situation is the regional representative of the High Commissioner for Refugees, Ms. Ninette Kelley, who, earlier this month, said, with regard to assistance,

> "The plans are in place, the staff is ready, but the funds are drying up. At this level of funding, vital programmes to ensure food, clean water, schooling for children, health care and shelter for newly arrived refugees are simply impossible".

Furthermore, Mr. Étienne Labande, head of country operations for the World Food Programme in Lebanon, said that "In one month, and with the current funding, more than 400,000 Syrian refugees in Lebanon will no longer receive food assistance".

Mr. António Guterres, the High Commissioner for Refugees, who has joined our meeting today, aptly summed up the situation when he said,

(*spoke in English*)

> "Lebanon needs massive support; it cannot do it alone."

(*spoke in Arabic*)

Allow me to reiterate the call addressed by the President of Lebanon, Mr. Michel Sleiman, to the Doha summit last month on the holding of an international conference on Syrian refugees. He said that the conference should not simply collect donations that had been pledged at the earlier Kuwait conference, but should work towards finding a way of sharing the burden of costs in accordance with the principle of shared responsibility, in order to reduce the negative impact of the refugee flow on internal and regional peace and security. Lebanon's President reiterated that message at the beginning of this month, when he encouraged the creation of camps on Syrian territory far away from the combat zones and under the protection of the United Nations. We urge the Council to look into that possibility.

Finally, Lebanon would like to join its voice to those of United Nations officials — Ms. Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs; Ms. Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of the World Food Programme; Mr. António Guterres, High Commissioner for Refugees; Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF; and Ms. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization — in exhorting the Council to take action,

(*spoke in English*)

> "In the name of all those who have so suffered, and the many more whose futures hang in the balance: Enough! Summon and use your influence, now, to save the Syrian people and save the region from disaster."

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): At the outset, allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this briefing, which gives us an opportunity to draw the attention of the international community once again to the gravity of the humanitarian situation in Syria. We followed with great concern the presentations made by the chiefs of the key United Nations humanitarian agencies.

The Syrian people's quest for a democratic and free Syria has completed its second year, while the Syrian regime continues to indiscriminately target its own people by every possible means, including the use of ballistic missiles. The ongoing assault is not only taking many lives but also destroying the historic and cultural heritage and economic infrastructure of Syria.

The humanitarian situation in Syria is deteriorating day by day. According to recent figures from the United Nations, the number of refugees has reached 1.3 million, with 4.5 million internally displaced persons and 6 million in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that the number of refugees could reach 3.5 million by the end of the year if the international community fails to act urgently.

The international community has a moral responsibility to support the Syrian people in their struggle, and that has to be done urgently, collectively and decisively in the face of a deteriorating humanitarian situation, which continues to promote a serious threat to regional peace and stability.

The joint appeal by the leaders of the United Nations humanitarian agencies this week is a serious wake-up call to the international community, and yet another reminder of the need to revisit the strategies in seeking to address the crisis. It was a call to everyone to start thinking outside the box and to act immediately for an effective strategy to save the Syrian people and the region from a catastrophe.

We continue to believe that the best way to end this bloodshed is through a political solution and transition, while preserving the territorial integrity and political unity of Syria. The international community, in particular the United Nations, has a crucial role to play in that. However, pending such a solution, we should be realistic and results-oriented in addressing the humanitarian dimension — the primary consequence of the political crisis.

We in Turkey are devoting our utmost efforts to responding to the ramifications of the Syrian crisis. We are now hosting more than 190,000 Syrians in 17 camps, in addition to at least 100,000 people who found their way to various Turkish cities and towns. We are doing our best to meet their everyday needs in all areas, including those related to health and education. Furthermore, the Turkish Red Crescent is delivering humanitarian relief at the zero point of the border with Syria, with transparency in conformity with international legitimacy and humanitarian principles.

The average number of refugees crossing into neighbouring countries on a daily basis has reached 8,000, and up to 14,000 on days of intense fighting. Until six months ago, that number was a couple of thousand.

Cross-line assistance is becoming increasingly complicated, while certain humanitarian goods, such as surgical supplies, are extensively blocked by the regime. That irresponsible policy will only lead to further outflows of refugees. The Council needs to consider alternative forms of aid delivery, including cross-border operations.

Neighbouring countries cannot and should not be asked to face the pressing challenges alone. The situation is no longer sustainable, and the existing methodology is not working to realize the principles of full, unimpeded and safe humanitarian access. The international community, from the perspective of burden-sharing, must take collective action. Pledging financial support is not sufficient in itself.

We are of the view that it is high time for the international community to discuss unexplored ways and means to address the problem of internally displaced persons within Syrian territory and to find alternative destinations for those who still choose to leave because they feel insecure.

That call has been echoed by many eminent regional leaders who feel the same pressure. It is high time that those legitimate concerns were taken into consideration by the international community, and certainly by the United Nations. Otherwise, we may find ourselves in a crisis scenario much larger that what we have been struggling with to date.

Let me conclude by expressing once again our support for the Syrian people's legitimate aspirations to live in dignity, as well as our determination to continue doing our utmost in responding to the humanitarian crisis just across our border. We would also like to remind the international community of its obligation to act urgently, decisively and responsibly before it is too late.

We regret to see the use of the Security Council floor for the dissemination of inaccurate and misleading information. The Council and, through the media, the international community have surely heard the coherent views of the participants regarding the policies of the Syrian regime. The facts provided cannot be blurred by one futile attempt to argue otherwise.

Turkey will continue to show solidarity with the Syrian people, whose views cannot be heard at this platform.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite the Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.